

聖剣使の禁呪詠唱

9

あわむら赤光

III.:refeia

聖剣使の禁呪詠唱

The Swordbringer
comes back.

GA文庫

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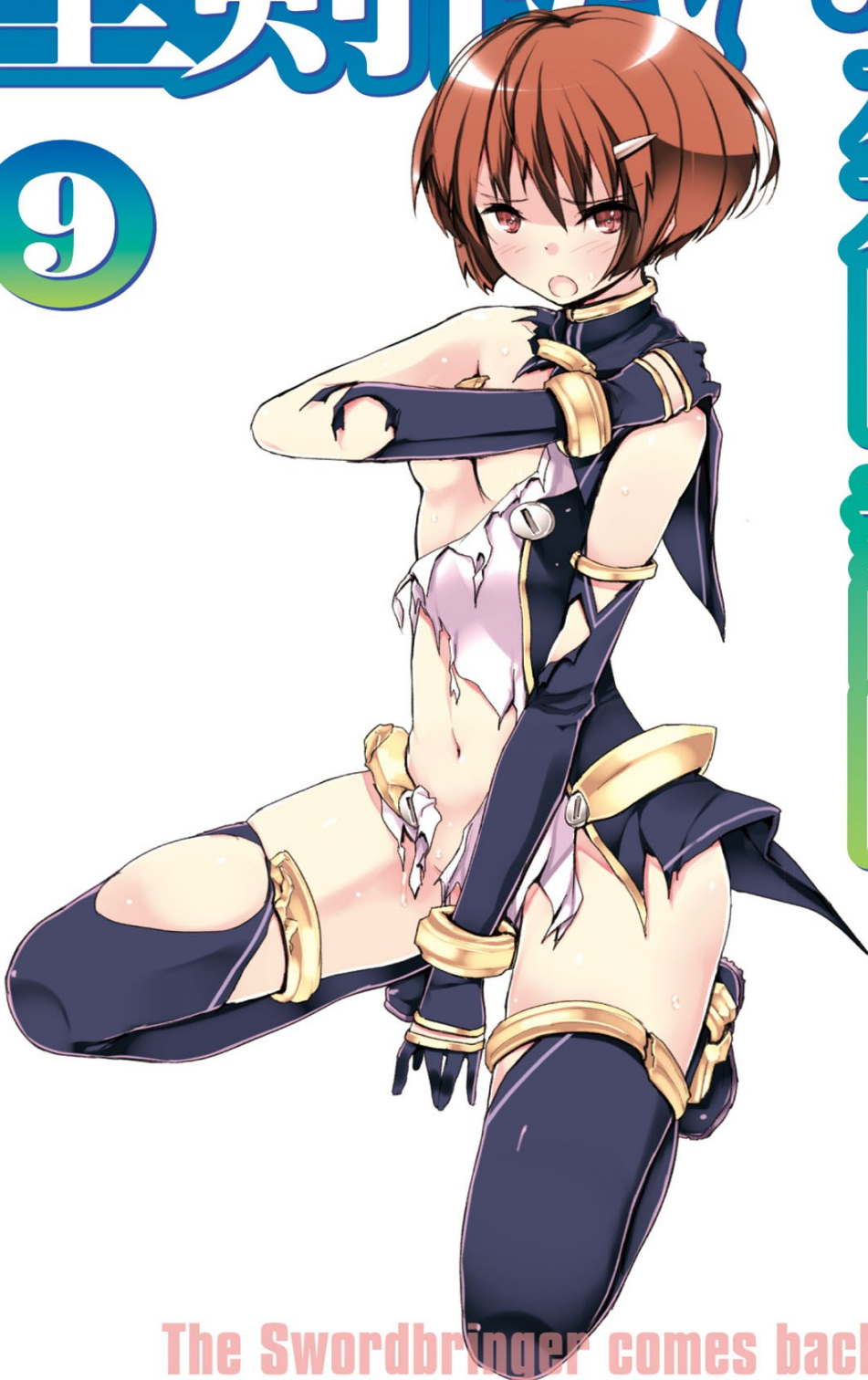
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聖剣使の森呪詠唱

9



The Swordbringer comes back.



今日はいい日だね
予感がするー！

モモ先輩のシャワールーム♡
諸葉どの「これから」の予定は？

「あんただって
今は妖精でもすぐ妖怪よー!」

「先輩は栄養が
身長にいくだけだものね」

「運動してれば
体重なんて
平気デース」

「サツキが体重計の上で
パフエを呪っていた」

作戦本部の食堂は賑やかに。
開戦前夜の舌戦ヒートアップ!?





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断てど尽きぬ再生の影
機は前人未到の速度の果てに!!

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Prologue

All the people at Order abandoned counting **it**.
Since Haimura Moroha appeared in the world—
How many times have they said the words “first in history”?
The number of gathered “Saviors” of the Japanese Division actually
amounted to 200 people.
Certainly, it was a large-scale mobilization never seen before.
At the time of the subjugation of the Dreadnought Sea Demon species in
Tokyo Bay, of which the worst memories remained vivid, a number of that
degree couldn’t be gathered.
It could be said that this was an evidence that the Japanese Division had
been growing steadily these three years since then.
As this became a joint operation between Japan, Britain and France, it could
be said that this was a demonstration towards the other countries.
Number was power.
That was the standard practice of *Order*.
Therefore—

Who would have thought that the frontline would collapse in just 5 minutes?

- I don’t believe it. This is a lie! A damn lieeeeeee!
The second platoon leader, Toomine, who belonged to Tokyo Headquarters,
spat out and raised hell.
As a veteran who had gone through many battlefields since the
establishment of the Japanese Division, it was difficult for him to accept this
reality.
Countless butterflies flew in front, on the right, on the left and even behind
him.
He was surrounded by monster butterflies that swarmed people and gave
them electric shocks with their bodies made of electric current.
Even if they were crushed or smashed, the electric butterflies gracefully
and flutteringly flew down from the sky and attacked.
By the time he looked up at them, the electric butterflies covered the sky
completely, his eyes were nothing but dazzled by them.
Extremely gruesome but beautiful grim reapers.

The fantastic view that concealed the heavens was in fact nothing but the scenery of hell itself.

Not just Toomine. Around 200 "Saviors" were fighting with all they had to deal with the attacking electric butterflies.

Everyone was doing the best they could do to manage one way or another the swarm of butterflies to avoid the death right before their eyes.

There was no chain of command anymore.

Toomine himself forgot to issue instructions to the troops under his command.

And what was absolutely terrifying was—

The fact that these electric butterflies weren't the enemy that had to be defeated.

The body that kept producing electric butterflies infinitely.

A monster with a total length of 300 meters and a height of over 60 meters.

*Fortress.**

TN: Fortress is the furigana reading for Stronghold-class "Metaphysical".

The beetle-like thing with seven horns shook the ground every time it moved its six legs.

His subordinates were scattered all at once.

Toomine shouted as he was blown away by the impact of the stomps.

– This isn't a battle anymore!

It was neither slaughter nor trampling down.

Humans didn't unintentionally call "trampling ants underfoot" that way.

Toomine was thrown violently against the ground, he rolled and stood up, feeling desperation and then, and without a moment's delay, shouted at the swarming electric butterflies while driving them away and looked up at the head of *Fortress* with blurred vision.

– Please! I ask of you! We're sorry!

He begged and prayed to the expressionless and inorganic face peculiar to insects.

In ancient times, men and women fell into a state of mind in which they regarded the huge organisms called whales as sacred.

And yet. Since **there were two other** monsters like this raging on the battlefield, it was no surprise that he was dumbfounded.

Originally, the person he should be praying to would be Suruga Andou.

At the time of the battle in Tokyo Bay, that saint led them.

But not now.

Because of the decision of fools who had plenty of political power, he was unable to leave Tokyo.

– It'd be great if they displayed versatility at times like this!

Therefore, only curses accumulated.

– There's no way we can fight with a monster like this without Suruga-sama...

Therefore, only despair accumulated.

The first large-scale joint operation across countries of [Order].
The rise of the curtain was the worst.
Who would have hypothesized the situation they had fallen into?
And yet, there were many people who were eagerly waiting and prepared to
the unprecedented large-scale operation for more than 10 days.
Yes, two weeks ago from today.
The situation unfolded with the rescue of Flavie Sakho—



Chapter 1: The souls of the □Metaphysicals□

She woke up from a sleep as deep as hell.

Her thought was vague, she couldn't remember who she was.

She kept wandering about in a nightmare for so, so long that she lost her self.

She lay down on a place she certainly didn't know, staring absentmindedly at the front.

The area was dim, a high and wide ceiling beyond the hazed field of vision looked onto her.

The ceiling looked like being made of a dark red rotting flesh.

A huge heart-like thing stood out in its center.

It shed a gloomy light from the inside, making the increasing and decreasing brilliance match the pulsations. Blood vessels spread radially from the heart, running and going along the ceiling. These also shone faintly, matching the pulsations, becoming light sources.

It was a creepy scene.

The feel of the floor transmitted from the back while facing upward was soft and lukewarm.

As if she was eaten by some huge creature and swallowed up in its body—

The moment she was reminded of that in her vague consciousness, her survival instinct urged her to stand up and to jump up.

At the same time, that strong survival instinct made her remember that her □self□ should be protected.

Flavie Sakho.

The French Division Vice-Head of the White Knight Organization.

The memories of who she was ran about in her brain like a rapid stream.

Her consciousness awakened.

And what was vividly projected in her mind was—the sour face in profile of the man she loved.

– Charles!

She cried.

And remembered.

She, who was struggling in a cold and dark prison as if it had been abandoned by the sun, could hear the voice of Charles calling her like a ray of light shining there.

Because of that, Flavie replied, being absorbed in it: "I will definitely return to you"

Thinking calmly, that might had been just a dream.

But she had a feeling in her heart that this was reality.

- Charles!

She shouted the name of her loved one again.

With that much, strength was brought back to all four limbs.

Flavie stood up.

For the first time in five years, she didn't know where she was.

(Where am I now?)

It was unclear what happened, but there was no doubt that she was taken away to a place she didn't know.

If so, it didn't matter where she was, the first thing to do was to escape.

Flavie surveyed her surroundings.

The air was stagnated, so much that she would throw up if she lost her focus.

It lingered, she even felt an unpleasant sensation as if coiling around her whole body.

As she endured it, she strained her eyes,

- U....h.

She was lost for words.

A large space enough to hold a concert.

A chilling scenery that resembled the interior body of living things.

An eerie light that flickered together with the irregular pulsation.

Persons who fell face down—were illuminated by that gloomy light.

At a glance, they were no less than 100 people.

- T-this is....

They were like Flavie was until some time ago.

They lay down on their backs, sleeping peacefully.

As if time had stopped.

They didn't turn over in their sleep, and if looked closely, they weren't breathing.

However, that didn't mean they were dead since a slight redness could be seen on their cheeks.

They probably were kidnapped and brought here just like Flavie.

Men and women of all ages and races.

Without understanding the intention of the criminal at all, Flavie strenuously soothed her thoughts that became more and more confused.

- Even if I think about it, don't get anything from it... do I?

Now that she was in this situation, she had no choice but to find an exit even if it was at random.

She strained her eyes even more and discovered a pathway—similar to a cave's tunnel—something more akin to digestive organs on the other side. Flavie readied herself and ran that way.

The sleeping people could only be left behind. She was an excellent *Kuroma*, but she was physically no different from ordinary people. The slender arms of women had difficulty to hold one child.

She had to escape to a safe place, ask her companions for help and come back here.

That wasn't hypocrisy, it was the very best.

From a distance, it looked like a narrow passage, but when she approached and took a look at it, it was fairly wide.

There were some sort of six-lane tunnel roads facing each other.

Moreover, they were so long she couldn't see the other side, and so long that diverged like a maze.

She was about to lose strength completely, but her strong feeling that wanted to see Charles breathed life into her legs.

- At any rate, I'll have to try every single one of them.

Her only choice was to proceed.

The first fork. She decided that she would take the right one at the first 4 forks and checked her breast pocket.

The silver dagger for courtesy that she always carried with her as magician's etiquette was still there.

The number "1" was carved on the floor to indicate she went to the right. Every time she ran into forked roads, she carved the information on the floor.

She drew a map in her head while taking measures so as to not forget the way she came.

She had confidence in her memory, and if she took her time and advanced steadily without being impatient, she should be able to escape someday.

Then, at the very moment when she saw a small hope.

The passage in the middle of the three-forked road that she ran into suddenly closed.

Nasal membranes blocked her way, expanding and occupying the whole path.

- No way....

Despite being shocked, Flavie turned the way she came at once.

She returned to the forked road that she had gone through moments ago.

It should have been a crossroads where the number "18" was carved there, but it was a T junction.

- Impossible....

Flavie understood.

She ended up stepping into a labyrinth that changed shape every moment.

With this, neither the carved marks nor the map drummed into her head were useful.

She became dumbfounded, and stood stock still.

And—

Something scratched her eardrums.

She heard something like a piercing cry echoing on the floor and walls from far away.

Her back muscles shivered.

It was an ominous, echoing voice.

- Wh... at...?

Flavie strained her ears.

But all she could hear was her own breathing.

- Was it... my imagination?

As soon as she felt relieved,

— □

She heard something like a piercing cry again.

- It's getting closer!

An uneasiness similar to having a hand thrust into her heart directly attacked her.

Moreover, and as if being stirred up by it, she left that place.

And ran fast of her own accord.

She continued selecting countless bifurcations at random. Her body moved instinctively.

This voice was bad news.

She had to escape from this voice.

She didn't know what its real form was, but she was convinced it spread like a dark cloud.

And.

—She heard it.

A reverberating and howling-like voice perforated Flavie's eardrums.

A shriek it didn't seem to speak the language of humans.

For some reason, the meaning was transmitted, a telepathic-sounding scream.

- It's coming! And quickly!

Flavie was surprised, her heart accelerated.

She froze from fear.

She had to run away, and yet, she helplessly broke down.

- No... noooooo.

Even if she forced and hit her own legs, she couldn't stand up.

- No, noo....

She tried to crawl while crying and tried to go away from the piercing cry even if a little, even if a little bit.

—Let me hear more.

The speed at which the voice approached got faster.

Flavie, already frantic, kept crawling.

Suddenly, her mouth was grabbed from behind.

Even though there was no presence or footsteps at all!

– Nnnnn....!

Flavie screamed without voice.

In the meanwhile, another hand came stretching from behind and held her waist.

She was caught—

She struggled as if she had caught fire, but that something from behind restrained her with the force of a vise, it didn't give an inch.

It was over.

She would end here without being able to meet Charles again.

Flavie panicked and strength left her body.

Then something was whispered in her ears.

□I'm an ally. Be relieved□

It was **Chinese language**. Flavie, who communicated with the east and west as a magician, understood.

She nervously twisted her neck horizontally and turned her gaze.

She could see the face of someone who hug her tight from behind.

An old man with a white-haired frost beard.

The facial expression of a good-natured old man as if he looked after his beloved grandchild.

(You're ... could it be...)

Since her mouth was blocked, she was unable to ask a question.

But the old man nodded calmly as if he had read her thoughts.

So she wasn't wrong.

The hermit who was called old man and who rarely appeared in public.

It wasn't a metaphor, a person or something, but—a Sennin freed from the body of man.

The Chinese Division Head Ma Diegua.

(Why... are you here...?)

□That sonny Charles—that clump of pride clung to me to help him. He went so far for the woman he loves that I also had to respond or else my chivalrous spirit would be sullied□

The good-natured old man squinted.

(Then Charles!)

□He's waiting outside. He's struggling flashily to attract the monsters□

As the old man said that he could crept in up to this point,

□But the most troublesome thing is lurking□

He sharpened his eyes for an instant.

(Trouble? What about you?)

□If *that* finds us, it won't end so simply□

The old man moved while hugging Flavie.

He chose one of the branching passages and quietly looked into the back of it from the shadows.

Because of that, Flavie saw it too.

There was something further inside the passage.

Something completely eerie.

Its size and shape were similar to a person.

But it wasn't a person.

It was completely pitch-black from the top of the head to the toes of its feet.

Its face was blank, it had no facial features.

Additionally, large and gaping holes were in the place where the ears originally were. Hollow holes that completely penetrated the head from left to right and that made one feel anxious where to look at.

Like an incarnated shadow figure.

It looked like the concept of death itself was embodied and loitered around the passages in search of prey.

Flavie was struck with awe and her throat was dry.

(*Eek*...)

□Oops. Were you going to shout? *That* seems to have sharp ears□

The old man became stronger and closed Flavie's mouth.

That shadow figure. That monster.

Was it... a □Metaphysical□?

But did human-type □Metaphysicals□ exist?

—Let me hear.

—Let me hear all about you.

—Expose everything, everything in front of me.

It searched about the passages high and low while letting out a piercing cry. It was definitely searching for them.

What would happen if they were found...?

The claws that grew all together from the fingers of the shadow figure were long and large like knives.

The *satana* it made drift from its body was so dark it became visible, the only way to call it was "miasma".

Flavie was about to lose heart just from imagine so.

□*Kuromas* can't use □*Rentei*□. You'll be calm if you get a bit of sleep, no?

Will you leave it to me, young lady?□

She had no choice but to agree unhesitatingly.

□Thank you for agreeing. It's no surprise Charles fell in love with you at first sight, young lady□

The voice of the man became distant.

Her consciousness was cut off by □*Saturn*□ and it sunk somewhere.

But she was by no means in a terrifying darkness, it was more like a comfortable nap.

Flavie was finally free from fear.



□—That seems to be the story so far. Could you grasp the situation?□

Edward smiled cheerfully while facing the front in the passenger seat of the car.

He candidly told in one go the experience of Flavie and the Chinese Division Head.

□It's a big issue□

Haimura Moroha nodded seriously in the back seat.

He leaned on the seat while organizing the information in his head.

It was a soft leather-covered seat. The thickness he felt caught him solidly.

It seemed to be a luxury car called Bentley Mulsanne, but when he got into the car, the nervous feeling that said □how many thousands of yen does it cost?□completely forgot about asking that.

Until a while ago, Moroha and the others were making merry and having fun at the school festival.

The heat of it had completely faded by now.

□In short, □Metaphysicals□ are created by pulling out the souls from humans?□

□I can only think of that. In fact, you saw the soul of Flavie Sakho being released when you defeated the headless □Metaphysical□, no?□

□But I don't know if that soul was of Flavie-san or someone else□

He certainly witnessed a light in the form of a person being released back then.

□There's no doubt. Immediately after the battle, Charles seems to have searched the direction the soul went flying. He used a helicopter and Dark Arts of exploration at will. He located the place where Flavie Sakho's real body is trapped, but he judged it was impossible to rescue her by himself, so he had no choice but to rely on the old man... and he accomplished so in half a day. I have no choice but to call that tenacity and not impatience□

He got the gist of it.

And—

– It's a terrible... story...

Ranjou Satsuki let out a voice of indignation.

During the conversation in English, she unconsciously spoke in Japanese. She was to the left side of Moroha. She hung her head and made her shoulders quiver.

□After waking up, Flavie-san tried to escape and was attacked by an evil spirit. If the old man hadn't hastened, she would have lost her life, no?□

Urushibara Shizuno was the one who confirmed it unconcernedly.

She was sat to the right side of Moroha, her face looked like a Noh mask like usual.

However, she wasn't calm at all, and that was transmitted from her voice that was deliberately subdued.

□If the □Metaphysical□could be beaten by herself, then Flavie Sakho would have to be promoted to S, right?□

Edward, in the passenger seat, shrugged his shoulders in a big way.

□That can't be allowed! What do you think people are?□

Satsuki raised her voice, a bottled-up anger.

Victims had their souls extracted, converted to monsters, used, and luckily they were released, or they were just killed after having served their purpose....

The demons' deeds.

While it was evident that the mastermind controlling the□Metaphysicals□from the shadows wasn't a good person, the truth that came to light was so sad and gloomy it was nauseating.

Satsuki turned her face away.

Her righteous indignation to the unknown mastermind became stronger.

Yes—

The theory of □the existence of a mastermind□pushed by Zhixin, its existence itself was almost determined.

□We have to thank the old man for bringing back Flavie Sakho together with valuable information□

And, an explanation was given by Edward first.

Flavie was kidnapped 5 years ago by an enigmatic person called "Invisible", instigated by corrupt politicians. Since humans were involved in the background of the incident, it was difficult to imagine that the existence of □Metaphysicals□ was unrelated to mankind.

□There are still more than 100 people captured. Our mission is to rescue them□

AJ, who held the steering wheel in the driver's seat, said in a stiff tone of voice.

The car was drove at a terrific speed, almost at the national speed limit. It continued to Nagano Expressway using the Chuuou Expressway to Shiojiri City.

They estimated to arrive this evening.

A countermeasures headquarters was established there by the Japanese Division Leaders 10 days ago—the day after Flavie was rescued.

Moroha and the others were preparing for the school festival without being aware of anything.

Until the preparations of the rescue side were ready, it wasn't particularly a problem that Moroha and company weren't at the countermeasures headquarters, this was Edward's consideration, saying that they should enjoy school life.

□It's not good to talk about the rescue between us only, so let's do so after we arrive at the countermeasures headquarters□

As of now, □Saviors□of the White Knight Organization were gathering one after another.

Charles and his close aides already departed on a helicopter.

The principal and the ones under her, the teachers and *Strikers* were also heading there by limited express train.

The reason why Moroha and the others weren't accompany them was that Edward wanted to ride the same car as him and insisted to go there by car. The fact of the matter was that he couldn't refuse when AJ requested him to □shut up and get in□.

That AJ gradually let a silent ghastliness overflow as they drew near the destination.

Her eyes twitched upwards little by little, she stared at her path with a look as if seeing an enemy.

It emitted a ghastly-like air.

□It'll take a while to get there. You can sleep□

And, saying in the same stiff tone of voice,

□Ara? Did you say something unusually kind?□

Shizuno was so unaffected she poked fun at her.

She, who was a very shy person, her usual self would get into a panic and say □You bastards are so noisy I can't drive properly!□but,

□You're an important fighting force. We'll troubled if you don't take a rest when you have to rest□

She replied in a serious tone of voice.

This was also a statement not typical of hers.

Though if she were the usual AJ, she would get cocky, saying something like □Since I'm here, now it's not your turn to shine!□

(She doesn't seem to be timid at all, but...)

Moroha asked a question while being suspicious.

□Like I thought... is it going to become an extreme battle?□

□Of course, that's a given□

AJ raised the corner of her eyes even more.

Edward, who was next to her, lowered the tone of his voice and said.

□Not only France was damaged by "Invisible"□

□Yeah...□

Moroha consented.

It could be possible that the British Division got people kidnapped like Flavie and that they were sleeping among the 100 people who were captured.

□Boris is a hopeless lustful man, Graham is a guy you really don't know what he's saying... but still, they are companions who fought and risked their lives with me□

He would absolutely save them.

That strong will was transmitted from AJ's back.

□Then I accept your kind offer. If you excuse me□

Moroha closed his eyes deeply.

Immediately from the left and right, the heads of Satsuki and Shizuno fell on his shoulders.

Due to the fatigue of the school festival, when the three of them went into a huddle, Morpheus immediately came.

Moroha left his consciousness to him.

The instant he fell into slumber, he thought back.

When he went to Russia and fought with Lightning Empress.

At that time, he wasn't able to repay even one of the loans, the big favors he received from AJ and Edward.

It was necessary to put their condition perfectly in order to muster all the strength of their whole strength.



Shiojiri City, Nagano Prefecture.

Although its population was less than 100,000, it was one of the most important points of transportation in the Chubu region.

Multiple highways and railways gathered at one point, so arriving in big cities such as Shinjuku, Nagoya and Hamamatsu using either of them was easy. The access was also easy to Gunma and Niigata prefectures.

Counting on that convenience, the White Knight Organization and the Japanese Division established a branch office in this area.

The deployment of personnel was numerous too.

While examining the Higashiyama region carefully, which was at their knees, they created a system where they could dispatch reinforcements

right away to the Hokuriku and Tokai regions and even to Kanto and Kansai regions if it was necessary.

With this as the background, the Shiojiri Branch Office was a magnificent facility with six buildings on a large site in the suburbs.

Just like Akane Academy, modern and brand-new buildings lined up.

Publicly, it was supposed to be the research facility of a foreign company, and ordinary people were not allowed.

This area also had the same reasoning as Akane Academy that took the appearance of being “private”.

If it was announced that it was state-controlled, they would have to get rid of interviews and disclosure requests, and that was troublesome.

AJ drove the car while showing her ID Tag at the strictly-guarded entrance gate.

□Are you guys hungry too?□

Edward said while looking at the onboard clock, it was already midnight.

□It seems they keep the cafeteria open, so you can go. The real briefing starts tomorrow. Can Jack join me a bit after dinner? There’s something I’d like to discuss with you about today□

Understanding the proposal, Moroha, Satsuki and Shizuno got out of the car and headed to the cafeteria.

Because there were guards with flashlights everywhere on the premises, they could ask the way without hesitation.

- When we graduate, we’ll do this kind of work, huh.

This was their first time seeing organizational facilities other than Akane Academy.

Along the way, Moroha looked around here and there with curiosity.

Then Shizuno,

- But it’s likely that you’ll be employed at the main office and not in a region like this, no?

Without a moment’s delay, Satsuki,

- Eh? Seriously? I thought that, if given the chance, I should work in Tokyo. Yeah.

- ... I told Moroha, but.... Within you, you don’t doubt you’ll work together with us, huh.

- Eh!? Are we going to be separated!?

- Of course there’s a possibility like that. You really aren’t aware, huh.

- Ueee... w-what should we do...? Nii-sama, repeat years at Akane Academy with me forever...

- That’s obviously a joke, right...?

Moroha was frightened at Satsuki who clung to him.

- I mean, rather than saying it’s not a joke, it’s not a laughing matter.

- It’s not going to happen anytime soon, but whatever happens next, accept it however it is, okay?

Shizuno tapped Satsuki’s shoulder.

With a vague condescending attitude.

- Why do you have a cool face like that!? What are you going to do if you were separated from Moroha?
- Thanks to a certain somebody, I'm totally skilled at lobbying inside the Japanese Division. So I'll just ask someone from HR to let us be together?
- S-so craftyyy. You, being underhanded has a limit! Intervene for me too!
- That will cost you 10 million yen.
- A bribe!? To think you're demanding so from a young and sweet girl, you fiend!

Satsuki began to cry and repeatedly hit Shizuno.

Shizuno looked at Satsuki who was vexed and panicked like a child while a small dimple appeared at a corner of her mouth.

And as if she had enjoyed herself until she was satisfied,

- I am j-o-k-i-n-g. I'll mediate for you for free. So don't worry, Satsuki.

She said in a tone of voice as if comforting a child.

Then, and immediately,

- Fue...

Satsuki blushed.

Because Shizuno called her "Satsuki" instead of "Ranjou-san".

Since the incident of the mansion of the "Witch of the prison", she somehow had a change of heart, not even Moroha could understand it, but Shizuno came to call her Satsuki.

As for Moroha, he thought it was a very good trend.

- O-okay. U-u-u-u-understood! Thank you! Will do so!

Not getting used to being called Satsuki, she spouted out flames from her face and got greatly confused.

- Oh! I'm so hungry! I'm so relieved that I'm extremely hungry!

After that, she ended up going first with a look as if feeling embarrassed and being unable to be there a second longer.

She moved with awkward movements, her right hand and right foot moved to the front at the same time.

She hung her head for a moment, she had a funny look on her face.

Moroha ended up spouting out spontaneously.

- No matter how many times I see it, I never get tired of it.
- You purposely don't say her name because you want to see that, right?



- Ara, that's wholly unexpected. Why would I go and be close to her so cheerfully? Both Satsuki and Elena-san are nice, but for some reason, those who overreact are so amusing.

- I think I get that.

- What do you mean?

Shizuno asked in a way that she really didn't know.

(Because you don't open your heart to others so simply)

That was the reason why the ones she was open to were much happier and couldn't help but be calm.

Morooha thought so, but it was embarrassing to point out such a thing with a straight face, so he said nothing.

- Hey, what do you mean?

- Err, she's hungry. I'm also really hungry.

He hurriedly took the lead in order to escape.

- Jeez. That's so mean of you.

Shizuno said so, but it was easy to get she didn't say it seriously.

- I won't let you go until you tell me.

She clung to Morooha's arm as a small dimple appeared.

- Huh? Take into consideration the place we are now.

- I refuse. Morooha is at fault here for giving excuses.

- You just thought that up, right?

As they argued in such a way, it was difficult to separate them until they arrived at the cafeteria somehow.

They had heard that the staff, which didn't include [Saviors], were many, but the cafeteria was too large.

Contrary to the image of a typical [cafeteria], long tables weren't used.

There were many round tables for four people lined up, the interior was chic and the air was similar to a hotel buffet.

Every *Striker* who had arrived earlier occupied one of its corners.

There were exactly 12 team members excluding Morooha and Satsuki,

Leshya was there too.

Everyone seemed to have eaten already, they were chatting while drinking tea.

It was a pity that Reserve Corps members had to stay at home, but Morooha recalled the scene at the last training camp.

The supply of food was stacks of evening meals on trays in a buffet style, and as they were looking for seats,

- Oh, I've been waiting for you! Come here. Sit down, Haimura.

The Vice-captain Kanzaki Tokiko tapped the chair next to hers.

Given her popularity, the chairs around her were empty.

Although Morooha saluted her with a smiling face, he sat down in an empty seat at another table.

- Why do you avoid me!?

- I don't want to be sexually harassed while having dinner. Please don't make me say it.

- N-nonsense.... Eating food while doing erotic stuff—you would be taking two of the three major desires, no? Nothing can be more wonderful in this world. Don't you know the word debauchery!?

Tokiko spat out and shouted reckless remarks, but,

- Kanzaki-kun. Please refrain from acting in a way that degrades our dignity outside Akane Academy.

When the Captain Isurugi Jin stared at her as he cleared his throat, she quickly obeyed.

- Those guys have been like this all this time, right? The feeling of tension up to now has gone down.

Taketsuru Uisuke, who was in the seat to the right of Moroha, smiled wryly. When this Senpai did so, he unusually started to look appropriate for it.

- There's no feeling at all that a major operation will begin.

Haruka Momochi grumbled to his left.

Souya Manako, a Senpai of his with plain glasses and who sat opposite him, spread a pocket paperback as if this had nothing to do with her.

- Isn't that great though?

Moroha added while extending the fork to the cold terrine.

It was a problem if they weren't motivated, but it was good they weren't worked up.

By the way, Satsuki and Shizuno were invited to Leshya's and Sophia's seats.

- Look, look, this sandwich looks tasty!

- Quiche was good, so try looking for it later.

- There were hamburgers too.

- You're saying you won't eat it because you aren't urged to, Urushibara!

- That's prejudice! I would like you to apologize to my soul food!*

TN: Soul food is the furigana reading for "taste of my home town".

And so on, a silly conversation had blossomed.

Moroha continued eating the steamed meat dumpling with relish, the seasoning of the gently boiled onions and the tightly packed minced meat was outstanding, he was completely satisfied with the high level of cooking. After he swallowed it,

- By the way, you said major operation; did you happen to hear anything?

He asked Haruka and company to share information.

As he learned about it alternately with Taketsuru, everyone from *Strikers* had heard about as much information as what Moroha and co. had heard from Edward in the car.

The first thing they heard was,

- This will be discussed in detail in tomorrow's briefing, but we heard that people who got their souls pulled out were caught in ridiculously troublesome places.

- So what is this major operation about?
- The main force of the French Division is on their way too. It's said that Japan is summoning all A-Ranks and a considerable number from the British Division in three days' time.
- Both Russia and America won't come, but instead they promised to rescue Sir Edward's and PSG's homes if they were targeted by the □Metaphysicals□.
- The Chinese Division can't do more than protecting their own country, but it seems the old man will come.
- Isn't this the first time there's a cross-country joint operation since the establishment of the White Knight Organization?

Morooha nodded at the explanation of Haruka and Taketsuru as he pulled in the green tea soba noodles.

I see, like I heard, it's a big operation.

He was impressed.

What made the representatives of each country care about a □joint operation□ was that Morooha didn't realize he was the origin of it.

- In other words! This is the perfect big stage for my name, Mannendou Kamekichi, to be known!

Kammie-senpai, who was next to Isurugi at another table, stood up vigorously.

- Thank you everyone who came all the way to Nagano to make me look better, especially Haimura! But everyone here is lucky. The honor of fighting with me which was confirmed by Nostradamus class and that will make me famous in the decisive battle of the century is now a bargain. He boasted, placing one foot on the table.

At that very moment—

- I value your guts. But don't behave in a bad way.

Isurugi struck his shin with a hand used like a sword wretchedly.

Vigorous motion, a heavy and brutal sound resounded.

Kamekichi turned a somersault and into the ground. He trembled and held his shin without being able to scream.

Stifled laughs leaked out from everywhere.

The herbivorous Takenaka, who was sit next to him, rubbed Kamekichi's back as he admonished him.

- We lack experience, so I think it's a good idea to be quiet this time.

Hearing so, everyone became silent.

Suddenly, people with troubled faces began to pop up.

The current *Strikers*, despite being students, had gained enough good results to be regarded as the main force of the Japanese Division.

This situation made them have such gloomy faces.

- The Senpais haven't participated in large-scale battles, have they?

Morooha cut a hamburger while confirming it with no one in particular.

- Yeah. Only Isurugi has experienced them among us.

The one who replied right away was Taketsuru.

The person in question agreed. Normally, if the enemy wasn't a *Dreadnought*, the fighting power of one team was gathered. And the *Dreadnoughts* that had appeared in Japan in the past. Two years ago, in June, a Dreadnought-class magic-beast species appeared, a large-scale subjugation operation was done by the Japanese Division. At that time, Isurugi and Taketsuru were first-year students. At the stage of the first semester, Isurugi was the only regular member of *Strikers*.

Due to circumstances like this, he was the only one who could participate in the subjugation operation.

The *Super Rookie*, who had already been regarded as a strong person comparable to an A-Rank, got to be greatly recognized in the battle and was officially recognized.

The *Dreadnought* that appeared next, the nine-headed serpent ended up being killed by Moroha alone.

The *Fortress* during the summer camp was made to fight only against *Strikers* due to the artifice of Lightning Empress.

With the exception of Isurugi, the current *Strikers* haven't had the chance to engage in large-scale group battles.

- Well, I'd say it's different from the usual way of doing things.

I can only imagine, Taketsuru added while shrugging his shoulders in a stylish pose.

Voices of approval, rather, sighs leaked out from here and there.

However, one person, Haruka,

- But if it's us, if we can only do the same things we always do, then we can do it like always!

She clasped her small fists and objected.

(Oh)

Moroha stopped the chopsticks and admired her on the inside.

Because he heard the positive and even happy opinion of Haruka who occasionally tortured herself frustratingly.

- Oh, oh, now you're looking important even though you just became a B-Rank, huh.

Without a moment's delay, Tokiko put a malicious look on her face and made a teasing remark.

- Wha!?

Haruka was surprised, but Tokiko immediately laughed boldly,

- But, oh well, I wish I could do it better than your hesitant, timid and gloomy past self.

She stated as if recognizing Haruka.

This was her first time.

Whoooa, commotion-sounding cheers welled up.

They were surprised for a while, their voices calmed down and in the end, Isurugi said a few words.

- It's as Momochi-kun says. Now it's the place for us to show off the teamwork we've been polishing every day. Even if it becomes a battlefield where friends and foes are jumbled together, we should be able to cooperate perfectly ordered.

Receiving the words of the captain, all present nodded strongly.

No one had a timid face anymore.

Not only because it was the statement of the man who once experienced battlefield, but also because everyone had a great trust in Isurugi as the commander.

□We'll make it!□Shouts of motivation rose from here and there.

When Moroha joined them and vocalized it—he felt a gaze from the side.

When he turned his face, Haruka was fixedly staring at him in the same small triumphant pose.

Her upturned eyes seemed to make an appeal.

(I'll do my best)

(I'll protect Moroha's back)

(I'll stop being a burden)

Seeing that, Moroha wished for a high five with a smiling face.

Haruka was delighted and struck it with all her might.

Like a ring spreading out, high fives were done by the persons and the ones sitting next to them.

Taketsuru and the seemingly troubled Manako.

Kamekichi and the fearful Takenaka.

Satsuki and the hopeless Shizuno.

Sophia and Leshya—

- NOOOOO! McDermott is limited to the taste of the States!

- I think Japan's McDermott is very delicious.

Suddenly, an argument started.

Sophia stood up with a very threatening attitude and Leshya left her seat composedly.

Because Sophia glared at her with a difference of 30 centimeters in height, Leshya glared right up at her.

- In Japan, the Macs have beefs way too oily! I miss the taste of the States!

- It's for that reason that I think they produce such a gaudy taste.

- NO! That's the taste of the devil! As a result of eating Japanese Macs for 3 years, I've grown 7 centimeters (2 inches) tall!

- ... Am I the odd one? Have I heard that you like Japanese McDermott too?

- That's a misunderstanding! I can't blame it even if I blame it!

She was left behind and got mad.

Moroha was lost for words.

Everyone was lost for words.

The same thought swirled in everyone's heads.

This is—
This is so trivial.

Although there was a nice atmosphere, when it came to these two people, they seemed to amuse themselves talking about Macs.

Since Leshya wasn't a troop member, she rarely had the chance to come in contact with Sophia on a daily basis.

Now it became a rare combination.

In fact, this might have been a "don't mix, it's a dangerous" combination.

The values of Americans and Russians seemed to clash with each other.

(No, it's not such a high-dimensional conversation...)

He reconsidered while covering his forehead.

Meanwhile, Leshya, who considered the words of Sophia who put a hand on her mouth,

- Hmm. Is that what you mean? Ranjou Satsuki sometimes curses the cakes and parfaits in front of the scale, but is it the same reason as that?

- Hey, Leshya! How come you don't read and understand the subtleties precisely at moments like this!?

Sparks flew, reaching even Satsuki, and after being flustered, she also participated in the war.

- It's only now that even you can be careless! Someone like Russians are supposed to change classes from fairies to goblins as soon as they grow older!

- That's a baseless slander. Russia isn't among the top 20 most obese countries.

- It's within the top 25!

- Kuh... how do you know that...?

- Why are you also looking it up? It's a solid evidence that you're nervous in your mind!

- I'm depressed... I should die...

- Now, now, we're training hard every day, so worry not.

- Stop consoling her so poorly. Sophie-senpai, whose nutrition goes entirely to her height, can never understand the worries of a maiden!

- Y-you may not know how much I care about thaaaaat!

In a situation like this....

Now that it had come to this, it was all too messy and uncollected.

- Now, everyone. Allow me to excuse me first.

The captain escaped.

Going to bed early was his creed, it can't be helped; it was that much irrelevant.

- This is neither the school festival launch nor a training camp, so act moderately.

Taketsuru, accompanied by Manako, followed him right away.

As if saying "You were warned, the role of the Senpais is over!"

Furthermore, and to not escape too late, the rest followed them in crowds.

The gates where the team members formed a line—in the middle of that, Moroha noticed.

A young man who came to the cafeteria against the flow.

It was Edward with whom he had parted from a while ago.

□It's almost time, Jack□

So this was the thing when he said "I have something to talk about later".

Moroha understood, saying □alright□ while returning the empty plates and tray.

□Ah! I'm going too!□

Satsuki, who was on the verge of scuffling with Leshya and Sophia, raised her hand showing how sharp her ears were.

- Read the situation.

Shizuno, who was graciously drinking tea and who had nothing to do with it, interjected. And pinched Satsuki's uniform.

- What do you mean!?

- Neither you nor I—no, nobody should butt in. That's what I'm talking about?

- Uuuuu.

Satsuki looked like she didn't agree to it, but she sat down in the chair.

In fact, Edward didn't say □I welcome you, young lady□ with his characteristic candidness.

Given the situation, even Moroha became anxious.

□Is it really okay for me to go there?□

□It's not worth considering unless you come□

Edward shrugged his shoulders exaggeratedly. He mustn't say something stupid.

Well, if that's the case, Moroha left the cafeteria too.

Haruka sent him out in a triumphant pose as if saying □Do your best□.

Moroha responded by raising his hand and Haruka nodded with groans many times.

Seeing that, Edward apologetically,

□Can we hurry a bit? There's a guy who's getting tired of waiting□

□Oh, that guy...□

They exchanged wry smiles while hurrying a bit as suggested.

Chapter 2: The leaders' conference

□You're late. Don't keep me waiting□

As soon as Moroha and Edward entered the room, they heard a tongue clicking.

A small council room that was deep in a building and that seemed to have proper security.

Two people came first, one of them was leaning on the chair at one of the heads of the table and gazed at them with his blue eyes.

Today, too, he was black from top to bottom. He wore leather gloves to protect his ten fingers.

He was Charles Saint-Germain.

□Let me to eat food slowly at least□

□Nonsense. My circumstances should be prioritized, I have nothing to do with your circumstances□

□... What a bothersome guy□

Moroha turned half-closed eyes to Charles who spoke out with a straight face.

Then he pulled himself together and looked at the other person who came first.

She was a beautiful black woman with definite looks.

As a woman, she was tall, her point of view was almost the same as Moroha. Judging from appearances, she had a flashy personal appearance just like a model.

But the back of her eyes were filled with a very calm and intelligent light.

- While it's not the best moment, I'm glad to meet you, Haimura Morohasan.

In Japanese. Her voice and tone were calm, and despite all that, her core had a smooth luster similar to premium chocolate.

- I am Flavie Sakho. I wished to have the pleasure to make your acquaintance.

- You are Flavie! I'm glad you were saved.

- I am too.

The smile of Flavie was like large flowers blossoming in full glory.

She spread her hands and greeted Moroha.

Then immediately.

She hugged him close and slowly.

She approached her cheek and whispered in his ear.

- I heard from Charles. It is all thanks to you. Thank you... very much.

The words of gratitude felt like they permeated his ear. The tone of voice.

□Hey□

Charles, who kept lying on his back with legs outstretched, changed his facial expression and half-rose to his feet.

Did he get angry because something unnecessary was revealed or because his fiancé was embracing another man?

□Get away! I'm telling you to get away! Get away right now!□

It was the latter.

His desperation was to such a degree it was like the three levels of English usage.

□Don't be so jealous□

Moroha smiled bitterly.

This hug perfectly transmitted from Flavie's body told him it wasn't passion but merely deep appreciation.

□D-don't misunderstand. Who's jealous of you?□

Although Charles said with a bright red face, when Flavie stopped hugging him, he blatantly felt relieved. He drank the water that was prepared at the meeting desk seemingly thirsty. His throat got way too dry in an instant.

(To think this guy had such an easy-to-understand side)

Unexpectedly... that didn't seem to be the case.

The loss of Flavie meant the removal of his restraints for a moment, he grew so wild he went after human domination.

Moroha turned to Flavie,

- Don't mention it. But I'm not that great, and I think Flavie-san should give her thanks to Charles.

- Is that so...? You are really just as Charles says.

Flavie seemed to be truly happy.

- So, what did he say?

- He said that the seventh S-Rank is a very kind man—unlike other people.

□*Spews out*□

The water that Charles was drinking spewed out.

□Flavie! This idiot! I get Chloe, but why you guuuys!□

He coughed violently while complaining loudly.

Moroha, Flavie and Edward, who dedicated to spectate, burst into laughter all at once!

□I want to diiiiie□

Even though Charles raised the corner of his eyes, he wasn't scary at all.

It only made it even more interesting.

It took some time until the laughter stopped.

Charles became sulky and faced away with chair and all.

Edward also sat on a seat and recommended Moroha to do so.

- Alright, I should take my leave.

Flavie bowed in a dignified way and left.

It seemed that she was expressly waiting for Moroha to thank him.

He ended up saying something like "Let me eat food slowly at least", he couldn't help but being ashamed.

He waited for her back to completely disappear outside the corridor before sitting down.

"Are we all the members?"

"No, there's another person"

"If it's me, then I'm already here"

Suddenly, a hoarse voice was heard.

Moroha opened his eyes wide.

Charles was startled too and Edward made his eyes blink.

In the conference room where Flavie took her leave there should be only three people.

Before they knew, the fourth person was sitting on a seat.

A good-natured old man with an abundant beard smiled with his whole face and stared at Moroha.

Where the hell did he come from?

There was only one doorway. They watched it the whole time until Flavie left the room.

No—

(How long has he been here...?)

Moroha rubbed his eyes many times.



The old man should certainly be sitting there, but the wall behind could be seen through him.

To the eyes of Moroha.

Was this old man really a human being?

Even such an absurd doubt crossed his mind.

Even Edward and Charles were closer to monsters than humans.

However, the impression of the old man was somewhat different from others.

The sea, the mountains, the wind—in other words, all things in nature seemed to unexpectedly take the form of the old man.

His *scale* couldn't be measured.*

*TN: Scale is the furigana reading for presence.

It was extraordinarily big, but it felt absurdly thin.

Like people not being usually aware of the existence of the ground they were standing on now.

Who no earth was he?

Before he thought that, the memory he heard the other day was recalled of its own accord.

—My dear master is a Sennin.

Moroha asked candidly.

□Are you the Chinese Division Head?□

The old man affirmed while laughing.

□I'm an old man called Ma Diegua. Feel free to call me "Tekka" in Japanese reading□

The Chinese Division Head said in a way that resembled a nice grandpa living in the neighborhood.

He didn't put on airs, as if it were a lie that he had been alive for hundreds of years.

His tone of voice was frank and satisfying.

However, after finishing the self-introduction, Tekka suddenly sat up straight.

The mouth that was laughing like a good-natured old man was closed.

□The young lady of moments ago was waiting here to thank you. I'm the opposite. I'm here to apologize to you□

He turned his sincere and clear eyes like a lake swaying to and fro in an enchanted lake to him.

Exactly like the shape of a polished mirror and still water.

□My disciple—Zhixin seems to have caused a lot of trouble for you. I'm sorry. Eventually, I will make him apologize in any way□

□I'm at a loss...□

Moroha scratched his head.

□Then Tekka-san didn't order him to do it?□

If so, even if he was apologized, it didn't make sense.

In fact, Moroha, unless he had a grudge against the old man, had no reason to be furious.

Or more precisely, it wasn't neither about forgiving nor not forgiving him.

□I don't like to work, so I left everything to him. I'm also responsible for that□

□Hmm□

Even if he was told so.

But in the end, it was a matter of □feelings□. Were he was told it was □reason□, it wouldn't be his style to say "Oh, I see, is that a lie? Then I'll resent you".

□What is Zhixin doing?□

If he was going to apologize, he thought it was clearly logic to turn that man in.

□I don't know. He ended up escaping somewhere□

□He's not afraid of being punished by Tekka-san?□

□That's not it... no, at least not until now. He wants to become a Sennin, but now that he has escaped from me, it's an impossible dream□

□I see...□

An unexpected conduct from the man who was fixated on living a long life. While strangely feeling so, he changed his mind as this wasn't a problem he shouldn't think deeply about now.

□If so, well, It's okay. Even if we care too much about him, there's hardly anything that we can do□

□Ho. You're a manly young boy, aren't you?□

Tekka smiled broadly and had a hearty laugh.

Edward, who was watching them seemingly interested, cut into the conversation.

□The old man may be lying to hide his dear disciple—haven't you thought so?□

□Oh stop. If Tekka-san had such an ulterior motive, he should just feign ignorance, no?□

Like hell he came for something like apologizing in the first place.

□How is that you don't get such a thing?□

□Well, I just wanted to hear those words. Because I certainly want Jack and the old man to get along!□

□If Tekka-san has no problem with it, then please let me do so□

□Nice answer! To celebrate your meeting, have a drink with me later—□

□No, it's not like I want to get along with you□

□Come on, open your heart, Jaa——ck!□

Moroha stuck out his tongue to Edward who was at his wits' end.

Seeing that kind of thing, Tekka laughed more and more.

Even the way he laughed was bright, clear and satisfying.

Moroha now noticed.

When he met Edward and Charles for the first time, sparks violently scattered as if raising an alarm in his head.
But, no matter how many times he looked at Tekka, it didn't seem to be like that.

Moroha and Edward continued having a silly and friendly chat for a while,
□Hey, you blockheads. If you don't put an end to it, I'll go home□
Charles, who became extremely sulky, said while facing away.
□Sorry, sorry. First of all, without an introduction, there's no discussion, right?□

Edward apologized without a piece of consideration.

Moroha also changed his mind,

□In the end, what was the point of gathering here?□

□I want Jack to know what's the situation while we can□

□But there's a briefing tomorrow?□

□Today is okay too□

He was willing to listen to them, but he didn't feel like doing it twice.

Moroha looked around at everyone surrounding the conference desk.

The Head of the British Division, the Head of the French Division and the Head of the Chinese Division were there.

Three of the White Knight Organization's VIPs were lined up.

Namely, a leaders' conference.

Mixed in the middle of all this, he greatly felt out of place—or at least Moroha felt that way.

Without being aware that if he were an ordinary person, his breathing would lose control and would flinch from just seating there.

□Then please□

Since he took too long to do so, Charles was disgusted.

Edward only nodded,

□Where should I start...? Oh, right. There are people who got their souls pulled out, but they're trapped in a troublesome place. Don't be surprised to hear it, okay? Who on earth would—□

□They're in the belly of a□Metaphysical□□

□Spoilers are awful, Charles! Isn't the production "to surprise Jack" ruined now!?!□

□Shut up. I hate the way you talk so high and mighty to each other□

□Charles is too cold! That's why you have no friends!□

□It's my first time hearing so. Is your circle of friends that big to be talking about that to others? The next time we meet, introduce me to them□

In less than a minute they started talking, Edward and Charles started a low-level quarrel.

□Hey. Charles. Because of you, the conversation is taking longer than necessary□

Moroha warned in a low voice, but it didn't reach their ears.

On the other hand, Tekka was in a mental state as if watching a quarrel of his grandchildren. An influential figure.

After cursing each other harshly,

□Look, now that Jack knows the truth of this shock, he's not surprised at all. Oh, it's so disappointing! So disappointing!□

Edward lamented exaggeratedly.

□No, no matter how you talked about it, I wasn't going to be surprised. I expected as much□

Moroha said curtly.

It was none other than Edward who told the escape and adventure of Flavie who wandered through a maze similar to the interior body of a giant creature.

He couldn't think of many unnatural places like that.

□Are we talking about an undiscovered *Fortress*?□

□Yeah. It has transformed itself into a rocky mountain, it's completely still.

"I didn't **see** it", said Andou, bitterly regretting it□

Edward spread a large blank paper on the table and dropped a few lines, drawing a mountain with simple design in the middle.

This seemed to represent the Fortress Class.

And named it with a note that said "Labyrinth" above it.

□The inside is a 3D maze□

He drew complicated lines in the mountain.

Although he was a composer, he seemed to have aptitude for painting. A maze that took effect of deformation was drawn.

□And there's an Evil Spirit Class inside, right?□

As Edward agreed, he drew a tall jet-black monster with ears in the maze. The name of this one was "Shade".

□Isn't there anything else? The fact that more than a hundred people were captured means that there are a hundred □Metaphysicals□alive, no? And those are nesting inside, right?□

□No, no presence of a quantity of monsters like that is perceived in the vicinity□

Tekka answered instead of him.

□If the sense of the old man says so, then it should be true, right?□

Edward also threw in interjections to show that he was paying attention with full confidence.

□Then around 100 of them are still hiding somewhere in the world...□

Those were words that chilled his spine.

□Nonsense. The conversation has derailed□

□Sorry□

Having pointed that by Charles who was still facing away, Moroha scratched his head.

Tekka returned to the conversation as he stroked his beard.

□Only three of them are there□

Receiving those words, Edward drew three illustrations surrounding the mountain.

A strange-looking beetle with a number of horns. Its name was "Seven Horns".

A gray giant with only an upper body. Its name was "Statue".

A lump of tentacles with faces of people at their ends. Its name was "Sea Anemone".

□The □Metaphysicals□ are protecting that Fortress class, huh...□

□Good answer. What do you think of the □Metaphysicals□?□

□Don't tell me that the three of them are Dreadnoughts?□

□Ahaha, yes, that's the case!□

Edward laughed Moroha's reply away.

Then pressed him with "what are they then?" but he didn't try to reply, putting on airs again.

□Tch—□

Charles lost his temper at his attitude.

Because of that, he ended up spoiling it again.

□They're Fortress Class. The three of them□

In words that were said plainly.

Moroha was unable to reply right away.

□Geez. Stop spoiling the story□

Seeing him, Edward chuckled to himself as if to say □I wanted to see Jack having that kind of face!□ while saying so, sound like he protested.

Moroha wasn't worried about that.

And groaned.

□The three of them...□

At the time of the summer camp, the Fortress Class that appeared in the open sea of Yamaguchi prefecture was cornered until nearly destroyed by *Strikers*.

Moroha looked at the drawing spread in front of Edward again.

Their impressions were scary.

The drawing that made good use of deformation and that had no ounce of exaggeration looked like a location with an impregnable defense.

□But if we don't clean up around it first, we won't be able to storm the labyrinth calmly...□

□It's impossible. Those guys can't be killed□

Charles spat out while grinding his teeth out of vexation.

□Did you say a weak-kneed thing?□

□I tried it before. While the old geezer sneaked inside the labyrinth, I needed to get the attention of others□

□Well, aren't you the right person for it?□

Since Charles threw himself into the wide open sky, he was able to unilaterally attack from a place where the enemy's attacks couldn't reach him.

□Since you're a master to that degree, there's no way you could have been killed, right?□

□If they're normal ones, that is. No matter how much those guys burned and boiled, they completely regenerated in an instant□

□That's so absurd...□

As Moroha was amazed, Edward continued the explanation.

□It seems those guys are quite linked to the labyrinth and the center of it□

On the drawing, as he drew lines between the labyrinth and the other three shapes,

□They're connected by a *satana* line like this. The labyrinth doesn't move and doesn't appear to have the ability to fight, but if the three bodies are hurt, they're healed by the *satana* sent in this line. Since it's an energy line with no substance, it cannot be cut□

□Is it absolutely necessary to crush those who are protected first...?□

□This may be what a proper Fortress Class should be. I named this condition □Stronghold□□

Edward labeled the drawing as □Stronghold□ at the top of it like a title.

□Isn't this kind of tiresome...?□

Moroha was stumped while looking at the drawing.

□I said before that the labyrinth can be killed but it's impossible to attack it from outside, right?□

Those who were trapped inside might be embroiled in.

So they ought to rescue those people first.

□I think there's no choice but to sneak into the labyrinth like the old man did. We must not be found by Shade. The other problem is how many

□Rentei□ experts will be there?□

I don't have the confidence, said Edward, raising both hands. □Rentei□ was a way of walking that isolated footsteps and presence, and it was one of the derived techniques of □Godlike Movement□.

It was a technique that wasn't very effective in anti □Metaphysicals□ battles, and it wasn't highly regarded by the White Knight Organization.

□Metaphysicals□ generally had keen senses and perception abilities, so it was quite difficult to hide one's presence thoroughly. It was faster to fight and defeat them from the front. The ones who expressly tempered it were a minority.

□... Moreover, if by any chance we're caught by Shade, we'll need a fighting force that can crush the Evil Spirit Class. That's not really gathered, is it?□

□We have no choice but to gather one. My head hurts though. To make a comparison, because all we have to do is gather a great number of people for the three shapes outside, I still don't feel at ease□

□Isn't enough for this guy to divert them alone? In fact, he was able to do it when Flavie-san was rescued□

Moroha pointed at Charles' back.

□Should I talk about it?□

Tekka, who was watching attentively with a friendly grin, cut into the conversation.

According to him—

The inside of the labyrinth was like a **living** labyrinth that changed shape every hour.

Well, it was a □Metaphysical□so it was expected, and since it didn't change that often, Tekka was able to explore it.

However, and all of a sudden, there was a moment when the structure of the labyrinth changed at a terrifying speed, and at that moment, it seemed that he would get stuck.

Later, when Tekka exchanged information with Charles, the timing when Charles was right out of breath and rested from the attacks coincided with the timing when the labyrinth rapidly changed.

□In other words, what does this mean?□

Moroha organized the stuff in his head and guessed.

□The ability of the labyrinth is to change its internal structure at a high speed and to restore its allies, the Fortress Class. So, resources are used during the recovery and the internal changes becomes slower—□

□That's very likely. The more damage we give to the three shapes surrounding it the easier it will be to walk through the labyrinth□

I see, that's why it's better to have a crowd of people than Charles alone.

A rescue team composed of few people and a distracting team with great fighting power.

He could understand that the strategy this time started with the selection.

□As expected, I'm part of the rescue team. A selected few is great, but what should we do? When we finally reach the people who are being caught, there will be more than a hundred people, right?□

Don't tell me that we're going to shuttle between the battlefield and the labyrinth?

No, no.

Moroha asked as if partially complaining.

It had been 10 days since the Countermeasures Headquarters was built, so it seemed that the operation was still possible somehow.

□What will you do, Jack? □

□Eh? Me? □

□So sluggish. Listen, seventh person—□

□Take it easy, Charles. Be tolerant. If we can come up with a better strategy, then we should get as many ideas as possible, right?□

□Tch. Hurry up□

Charles backed down, probably because he felt it was a sound argument.

But, and as if pressing for an answer, he gazed at Moroha with scary eyes.

Moroha seriously considered it while dodging his gaze.

And the answer came from an unexpectedly close thing.

□That's right... we can use the school principal's □Transportal□□

It was possible to let 100 people escape at a time if the rescue team arrived at the place where the people were caught, establish a link and the school principal opened the gate from outside.

□You have concluded the same as us. It sounds reliable□

□Flattery is unneeded□

□It's my honest impression. It's very important whether or not the strategy comprehension of the captain of the rescue team who has to act secretly and separately is high. Since that will have to be done by you after all□

Edward winked with a smiling face.

□Hold on.... Who will be the captain of the rescue team?□

The fingers of Edward and Charles simultaneously pointed at Moroha.

□I, who have crossed swords with you once, give my seal of approval to the mastery of your □Godlike Movement□! □

□Additionally. You have the achievement of defeating an Evil Spirit Class once□

□Please, this is a task that only Jack can do□

Having things pointed out from the left and right, Moroha scratched his head, irritated.

□Fiiine. But stop with the captain. I'm not suitable for it□

□Don't ask for the impossible. There's no human being who can order this and that to you, an S-Rank. I'm completely losing my nerve□

□Who on earth attached a weird rank to me without asking?□

Moroha retorted with all his might, but he was repelled by Edward's smile.*

*TN: Smile is the furigana reading for shamelessness.

He collected himself.

□Shouldn't the captain be Tekka-san? He succeeded in intruding once.

That's not something I can surely be relied on□

Moroha proposed the most extreme thing there was, but.

□No.... I'm sorry, but I don't intend to participate in the operation itself□

Tekka declined with a bitter look.

Moroha was disappointed.

But when he looked at the sullen face with wrinkles all over his face, it was transmitted to him that he really wasn't going to do it.

□You better remember. This guy has no fighting power□

Charles interrupted while still facing away.

It sounded like he spoke badly of him, but his usual severe way of speaking had calmed down.

□Are you serious? Isn't Tekka-san really strong? That's what I heard though□

□He's half-dead. No matter how strong he is. It was considerably impossible for this old geezer to rescue Flavie□

Even this difficult person was still grateful? Because of that, his sharp tongue became dull.

□Is there... a reason why?□

Moroha changed his focus from Charles to Tekka.

Tekka still had a sullen face.

He appeared to not want to explain it.

However, he immediately started to explain, giving a clear explanation:

□Well, it's not my real intention to end up having secrets□.

His look of a good-natured old man came back completely.

□I'm a Sennin who abandoned the human body□

He held out his right hand over the table.

□I heard that too, but...□

Moroha shook hands with Tekka while suspecting that. At that moment,

□Wha...□

He was surprised.

It was light. It hardly felt like the hand of a person.

No matter how old he were, or if his hand was thin as a dead tree, the human body was composed of flesh, bones and muscles.

He felt none of it.

□Surprised? My body is made of *prana*□

Tekka laughed heartily.

Namely—he abandoned his physical body and became a Sennin.

□That's why I don't need to eat normal food anymore, I can keep on living by just breathing in the haze and air deep in the mountains. For hundreds of years. I will die when karma has accumulated, this body is corrupted and I can't move□

□Karma? Corrupted...?□

□Yes. When I'm exposed to human malice, my body accumulates karma like sediment. It becomes corrupted and heavy. Strife and killings make it faster□

For that reason he hid in a remote place?

Because of that he left everything to Zhixin?

He had heard that he didn't want to work, but he wondered what would happen if it was made public?

□The old man told us that *satana* seems to be a mass of humans' negative emotions. He searched in the labyrinth that was filled with it. There's no way he got away without consequences. That's nothing but chivalrous spirit□

As if Tekka himself was embarrassed by the praises of Edward,

□Noo, I'm gaining weight. I'll have to go on a diet□

He told a joke, bursting into laughter.

He thought that even now he was light, but he seemed to be actually much lighter.

So much he could ride a cloud.

□I see... I understand□

Moroha understood while letting go of Tekka's hand.

□Moroha agrees to be the captain, right?□

And nodded reluctantly.

He felt like it was just selfish to make it any more difficult.

□The next is... we plan to recruit experts for covert activities, but, let me see, how many of them should we gather?□

□One person. The ideal one under my command. I'll lend them this time□

□As for me, there's Angela, she does have skill, but she's too noisy...□

That AJ walking on her tiptoes—

Imagining so, Moroha was about to burst into laughter. No, it wasn't a funny story.

He thought seriously and suggested.

□I have only one person in mind, but can they join the rescue team?□

□Wow! They got Jack's approval? They're gladly welcome!□

Edward clapped, being delighted.

Charles remained silent while facing away.

Tekka just watched attentively like a good-natured old man.

There were no objections from any of the three leaders. It was settled.

□Then we'll talk tomorrow morning□

Moroha said while looking at the wall clock.

It was already past midnight, so it was impudent to visit them now.

He would try to settle it quickly before the briefing.

The person in question was enthusiastic, and surely they would agree to it..... probably.

Chapter 3: Momochi Haruka's small step

Haruka woke feeling good the next morning.

The Shiojiri branch office also had accommodation facilities similar to hotels in the center of the city. The members of *Strikers* were assigned to single rooms and stayed overnight.

Cleanly-arranged rooms and beds.

The feeling of tension that came before the large-scale operation swept away the physical weariness of waking up properly.

She washed her face and changed into her running wear.

Early morning jogging was Haruka's daily routine.

The established theory of the White Knight Organization said that *Shirogane* increasing their physique to superhuman levels by means of *prana* was meaningless.

In fact, it wasn't logical for the petite and slender Satsuki to have such power if the physical power of the person was also related to it.

Still, Haruka tempered her body with jogging every morning.

At the same time, she had the feeling that "Godlike Movement" was being tempered too.

She was taught by Moroha before that this "feeling" was never something to be trifled with.

Still, the established theory of the White Knight Organization said that mental state didn't affect *prana*....

If what Moroha said was different from what the White Knight Organization said.

Then Haruka would believe Moroha.

Before departure, Haruka prepared a backpack and a smartphone.

It was certainly fresh to run in an unknown cityscape, but if she were to get lost, it would spoil her mood.

When she tried checking the map app, she found an email coming from Moroha.

She was tired because of the school festival and didn't notice it because she fell asleep immediately last night.

He had something to talk.

She sent an email that said "I'm jogging from the present moment, but is it something urgent?" and a reply came right away, saying "Please let me accompany you"

From the morning, and with Moroha, just the two of them would jog in an unknown city.

A bittersweet feeling filled her heart just by imagining so.

(I-isn't this something like a date...?)

If a normal high school girl were to hear that, she would retort with "No, no!", but Haruka ended up being ecstatic.

(Then I have to get ready. At the very least. Something like...)

Of course, she didn't bring any special cute clothes.

A shower at least.... *Yeah, that's right.* A meeting with a boy.

Haruka sent an email to Moroha, writing "I'm taking a shower so I'll be a bit late". She took off her clothes and went to the shower room included in her room excitedly.

(What does he want to talk with me?)

She quickly took a shower, rubbed her body with a sponge and thought while being covered with foam.

No, even Haruka understood Moroha. It wasn't something like a romantic conversation. She didn't expect an unrealistic thing like that.

But then, at the drop of a hat, it wasn't imaginable.

It didn't matter. She could jog with Moroha. Or anything.

(I feel like today will be a good day!)

The hot water pouring on her head. It felt good.

While she closed her eyes and washed off the foam, her mouth relaxed and became loose.

When she returned to the bedroom, she realized that a reply to the email she sent moments ago had just arrived.

From the kind Moroha. Was the answer something like "Take your time!"?

She cheerfully checked it out.

"We're going to sweat now so why taking a shower?"

Haruka involuntarily fell prostrated on the bed.

I got way too ecstatic, huh....

While blushing, she went to the front entrance gate, the meeting place.

Fortunately, Moroha didn't press her further about it.

She couldn't think of an excuse if she were questioned sharply.

Anyhow—they presented their ID Tags to the two security guards and went outside.

The calendar was about to reach November.

Shiojiri City, located in the Matsumoto Basin, was high above sea level, the morning air felt piercingly cold.

The two of them began to run side-by-side in the thick mist.

- Do you always run this early?

And the cheerful Moroha.

A jersey that seemed to have been brought instead of pajamas. It was a little uncool. But the simplicity and artlessness were well expressed; Haruka thought it was very good.

- Moroha is an early riser for sure.

-

Returning so instead of a greeting, Moroha suddenly kept silent.

He somehow looked unwell.

Despite this morning feeling so good.

- What is it? Your pillow was changed so you couldn't sleep?

- ... I'll say it if you listen with pure feelings and without mixing prejudice in it at all.

The seemingly embarrassed Moroha pouted.

- What an irritating guy. I'll laugh it off lightly so say it.

- Then—

As he ran, Moroha cleared his throat.

And confessed with an extremely serious face.

- I was used to sleeping even if my pillow changed, but... lately, when I'm not hugging Maya, I have difficulty falling asleep—

- I'm calling the police! I'm calling them—right now!

- That's why I told you to listen unprejudiced.

- What unprejudiced? This is indiscrimination!

- It's not like I sleep with Maya feeling guilty.

- Sure. You always deceive Satsuki like that, don't you!? Saying you're older brother and younger sister!



- Please believe what I say a bit more!

- How can I believe you!?

They argued while running without seeing what was in front of them. It wasn't a very populated street, their voices echoed more than they thought.

They hit the street by chance and made an old lady who was walking her dog knit her brows. Haruka turned bright red and hung her head.

- Alright, alright. I believe you....

She pouted her lips.

- But fix that thing of being unable to sleep properly before the day of the operation. It'll be inexcusable if you can't show your strength because of lack of sleep.

- I already bear that in mind.

Moroha swore, raising one hand and reconciled.

Haruka looked forward and concentrated on jogging.

As the sun rose, the mist cleared and the cityscape appeared as if a white veil rose.

The scenery they saw for the first time.

When they accelerated, it flowed backwards.

They ran a lot and were able to see a lot of things.

Moreover, they poked at each other.

Their legs were light. Their bodies were light.

- I'm in perfect form!

She was festive all of a sudden and bragged until becoming talkative.

- I'm glad to hear that.

Moroha, who ran parallel to her, was pleased. Just like that, he began to talk with a carefree tone of voice.

As it always was, it was about Haruka.

- I want Momo-senpai to follow the operation this time without fail.

- What the, it's the usual thing, isn't it?

She expected he would say something new but it was nothing.

Or Moroha thought that Haruka wouldn't follow him unless he relied fully on her?

Wasn't that a bit too trusting?

Haruka had a sulky look.

- That's right. It's the usual thing.

Without knowing about her feelings, Moroha laughed, looking quite indifferent.

- You have to sneak into the body of the Fortress class, so yeah, I look forward working with you.

Haruka fell down on the spot.

She was running so fast she scraped her body with the road.

Her legs hurt. Her body hurt.

- Momo-senpai?

Moroha became confused and ran up to her, but she couldn't move for a short while because of pain.

- What... was that just now....?

She finally asked back while receiving help.

- You will have to creep in on the next operation.

Moroha began to explain while pulling her up.

He carefully explained all about the situation and the strategy he knew.

Listening to him, Haruka, in a few words:

- I-it's ridiculous...

With that, she became speechless.

As Moroha scratched his head,

- But someone has to sneak in.

- Even so, why me...?

- Momo-senpai is qualified for it, no? I recommended you in advance. And both Edward and Charles would like to rely on Senpai.

Edowaado.

Sharuru.

Those names belonged to who now...?

For a moment, her head stopped working.

Both shoulders suddenly got heavier.

- Edward said he'd like to be granted permission to greet Momo-senpai later.

- It's no good for the British Division Head to greet someone like me!

Haruka screamed.

- It's impossible, impossible! It's absolutely impossible for me!

- But you're in perfect form, aren't you?

- Someone like me being in good shape is of no importance!

- Come on, it's nothing like that.

- It is, you idiot! A lot of strong people gathered from various Divisions, no?

You don't need to leave such an important task to someone like me.

- It's nothing like that. Isurugi-senpai is incredibly strong, but when it comes to[Rentei], Momo-senpai is far skilled than him, you know?

- Sir Edward should do it then! He's an S-Rank!

- That guy can't do covert activities. He makes too much noise when wearing his armor.

- Anyhow, it's impossible! I have no confidence! I'll attack the other Fortress class with everyone outside.

- Why is Momo-senpai returning to her usual self? Yesterday you were so full of confidence that you even encouraged everyone. You looked so cool.

- I just said we have to do what we can do!

- Isn't that good? You can do it.

- You give me too much credit. Why don't you rely on other people?

- Yesterday, Momo-senpai said she would do her best to protect my back.

- I didn't!? Don't read people's hearts.

- You were thinking so, weren't you?

Moroha smiled broadly.
He held out his right hand, looking for a handshake.
Haruka could do nothing but be overwhelmed.
She stepped back.
She was at a loss.
She stepped back.
She was at a loss.
She stepped—her back strongly collided with the wall of a private house.
She was cornered, and trembled strongly.
Then.
Moroha made a serious face.
Surprised, Haruka stopped trembling.
- Moro...ha?
The terrifyingly serious look of Moroha.
But at the bottom of it, the warm light that was seriously concerned about Haruka could be seen.
- Nobody has an easy and safe role, neither the rescue team nor the diversion team. This time is really dangerous.
- I, I know that much.
Haruka bluffed while not being aware of her cheeks turning red.
- Earlier, you said you would attack the other Fortress classes with everyone outside, but those will be hidden among everyone and will have their duties distributed—whatever you're thinking, it's very dangerous, so please be careful.
- ...
She was startled.
She hadn't think about it clearly.
But she fell into a mood as if her core was directly hit.
- If you get that much, then this is far as our conversation will go. If you're strongly against it, I won't force you.
- ... U.
Haruka groaned.
Nothing but a groan came out.
And yet, it was absolutely necessary to answer properly.
She had no courage.
She had no confidence.
She always, always, always, always—
She held her arm and hung her head.
- Then, let's continue.
Moroha showed a carefree smile this time and pulled his hand.
Just like a doll, Haruka left it as is and began to run.
Her legs were heavy. Her body was heavy.
Even though the air was clear like this, her chest didn't clear up even after jogging.



The briefing hardly reached Haruka's ears.

It wasn't because she was together with Moroha.

She was spacing out, she couldn't concentrate at all.

At the moment, the number of "Saviors" who were already in Shiojiri was significant, they were excited by the explanation given by Sir Edward himself, even the blockhead Shizuno was listening seriously. Haruka wasn't alone here.

Several elites were selected to be the rescue team, even when cheers welled up each time Edward called their names, she was listening to it like it was an event in a distant world.

Of course, Haruka didn't get her name called.

- Hello? Are you awake?

After the end of it, the back of her head was knocked by Taketsuru who was in the back seat with a rolled up notebook.

- Isn't it unusual for you to be this frivolous?

- ... I'm sorry.

Haruka left her seat, turned her head and apologized, murmuring.

- What are you thinking about? Won't you try talking to your Onii-san?

Taketsuru winked with a good-looking gesture while still resting his chin in one of his hands on the desk.

However, Haruka hesitated and,

- What the, am I not reliable?

- ... You aren't.

- Whaaaaaaa? One usually denies it even if it's a lie.

Taketsuru hit the desk with both hands and protested.

- ... Even if I listen to Taketsuru-senpai, I won't be able to be taught the way to do it quickly and skillfully.

- Whaaaaaaa? Do you see me like that!?

Taketsuru hit the desk with his right fist and protested.

Seeing that, Manako, who was sitting next to him, as she fixed the position of her plain glasses,

- Isn't it a legitimate evaluation?

- Even Mana-chaaaaaan? That's not true!

Probably because he was shocked to that degree, Taketsuru opened his mouth wide.

- What if you change that frivolous-**looking** behavior?

- Wait, Mana-chan! Mana-chan!

Taketsuru desperately went after Manako who left those words with him and left the room.

It was really their usual fashion.

Natural Stance as Moroha said.

They weren't shaking even when hearing that a mortal combat in which they would have to take on four Fortress class and one Evil Spirit would start.

As expected of the third-years of the golden generation. A state of mind that should be respected.

Very different from Haruka which made her be even more hesitant.

Lunch.

Turning down the invitation from Moroha and Satsuki, she went to the convenient store as if escaping stealthily.

She bought a sandwich and ate it restlessly at the storefront.

It wasn't tasty.

But the meal she ate with everyone last night was so delicious.

Going to nowhere in specific, she eventually returned to the Shiojiri branch office and roamed without meaning.

The inside of the bureau was full of energy.

Remarkably skilled □Saviors□ gathered one after the other from all over Japan.

To head to the operation, it seemed they were doing intense training and briefing sessions here and there.

In the middle of that, Haruka happened to see something surprising.

There were many small multipurpose conference rooms inside the Shiojiri branch office facility.

From one of them, she heard the voice of Kamekichi.

- As expected of mister Zlatan! I've awakened to the truth!

A questionable Kansai dialect escaped even to the corridor.

Haruka subconsciously peeked through the window.

Kamekichi was deep in talk with a stranger, surrounded by drawings.

An incredibly big man.

He was probably over 2 meters tall and had wide shoulders and a thick chest.

His magnificent Roman nose was almost unforgettable when seen.

Because he wore a black suit and a saber, even Haruka barely knew that he was one of the member of the French Division's □Les Éléments□.

- It's because of your unique idea.

Despite being a man with an imposing face and body, his speaking was cheerful and close to Kamekichi.

(Mannendou... what are you doing...?)

Haruka was amazed.

Although it became a paying-their-debt-in-small-amounts situation, it hadn't been a month since they were attacked by □Les Éléments□.

She heard that they were in the branch office, but to think they were explained that it would be a joint operation with the French Division.

Wasn't it dangerous?

Seeing them with those eyes, she made eye contact with Kamekichi through the window.

- What are you doing, Momochi!? You immediately had the nerve to get wind of me!?

Simply because Kamekichi was annoyed, he combed his hair upwards, pretending to be a famous person.

So noisy.

She thought of trying to take her leave immediately, but it bothered her what he was doing.

- Are you a companion of Mannendou-dono?

The big man with Roman nose opened the door as if saying "ladies first".

Haruka was troubled by his instant reaction.

She wasn't the one who fought directly with him, but he was of that ring. This giant man.

She by no means wanted to get along or get close to them.

As things are, should she pretend she didn't see this and take her leave—

While she thought so, Kamekichi suddenly spouted out.

- You're scared because he's a good person, CHICKEN!

He mocked her with a triumphant look.

- It has nothing to do with being scared!

Haruka immediately shouted back in anger.

If she were to run away now, she would be ridiculed by Kamekichi until she graduated.

She went in while squaring her shoulders.

The big man with Roman nose who invited her in bowed,

- I am the person known as Zlatan. I was conferred the rank of the lead knight of □Cradle of the Sun□ and I was given the court rank of □Le Solide□.

He gave his name in a traditional way.

Haruka didn't give her name back. She couldn't feel like making friends with him.

However, she was surprised to learn that this big man was the VIP ranked next to the Six Heads.

(Why is a person like him with Mannendou...?)

What on earth were they doing? Haruka went to the side of Kamekichi as if pressing for an answer.

It seemed her intention was transmitted.

Kamekichi made a strange pose with his arms folded and a knee raised,

- The old man and I are adding a new page to the history of magic.

He spattered with a voice that sounded very pretentious.

With eyes half-closed, Haruka said nothing.

- What's with that suspicious gaze!? Hey, open your pupils!

Kamekichi shouted, making saliva fly, but Haruka was careful to not be hit by it.

- ... So, when did you get so friendly?

- We're pursuing a new page!

- It's not a problem if you aren't going to say it, but can I go now?

- Tch, so bothersome.

Kamekichi talked, sounding incredibly delighted while cursing.

With a cold narrator tone of voice,

- That *Impact Day* when we, *Strikers*, were attacked by [Les Éléments]. I also squared off against the master golem called Émilienne; we won with difficulty.

- You're telling lies from the very beginning.

She **had heard** from Tanaka Tarou, the teacher in charge of Class 1 Year 1, that Émilienne was defeated in a surprise attack.

- However, I'm not a cheap guy who will be conceited for winning.

Strangely impressed by the Dark Arts of the enemy yet splendid elder sister Émilienne, the next day I searched for her and visited a hotel that became the lair of [Les Éléments].

- ... How do you do something that dangerous?

- But my elder sister was in a serious unconscious condition. Certainly, for me, she wasn't an opponent I could go easy on. So about it, I still have some way to go. I should reflect on it.

- Since you get it, the next thing will be faster.

- Instead of the elder sister, it was the old man here who warmly welcomed me. We mutually understood on the same day as we did collaborative research. Aren't you jealous!?

- No, I'm nothing but amazed...

With her eyes still half-closed, Haruka retorted to Kamekichi who puffed up.

- What amazed you!?

- You're talking about making friends with the enemy while we were suffering from healing our injuries? I can be nothing but amazed.

- Th—you're so pesky, Momochi.

Kamekichi got cocky, his face turned into the very picture of condescendence.

Should she give him a hard blow?

- I don't look back on yesterday. Yes—I only see the future with these eyes of mine. You curse at me, saying I'm arrogant, but I don't care though? If I can have a bigger growth, then I won't hesitate to join forces with yesterday's enemy!

While taking a pose that pointed to heaven, Kamekichi got carried away with his own speech.

And Zlatan agreed with him.

The big man folded his thick arms, closed his eyes and listened carefully and calmly,

– We magicians value to seek the truth. The strong spirit of Mannendou-dono is what I like.

I see, she understood it was mutual understanding.

– Still, you said collaborative research, but the truth is that your side is unilaterally troubled, no?

Still with eyes half-closed, Haruka questioned Kamekichi.

However, it was Zlatan who replied.

– Not at all.

Being hit by a strong tone of voice from behind, Haruka was about to spring up.

– The eccentric point of view of Mannendou-dono and his many ingenious ideas are unparalleled motivation for those who have felt they've been in a stalemate in recent years.

To think there were times when oddballs and eccentric people were useful.

For Haruka, the big man with Roman nose said something seriously, something that could only be heard as a joke.

And this French Knight didn't look like someone who would say a joke like that.

Haruka turned her half-closed eyes to the drawing on the desktop.

Was it a blueprint or something?

Several parts were drawn and each one had characters written that Haruka couldn't read.

There were two types of handwriting.

They probably were Zlatan's and Kamekichi's.

They filled the space tightly as if competing with each other.

The seriousness of the two was transmitted from the stroke of the brushes.

Haruka slowly opened her half-opened eyes.

– It was a secret weapon. You found it so it can't be helped. I'm developing a golem together with the old man here, so can you keep it a secret please?

Kamekichi said proudly, without trying to hide the blueprint.

– A golem...? You...?

Kamekichi spoke even more proudly of it.

– I've been thinking for a while, but the truth is that my talent in Dark Arts, when compared to Haimura's, is a bit inferior. But giving up is annoying, no? It's something similar to that.

Because of that, he seemed to have been secretly working hard to try proving himself superior in other field.

– No matter how much time passes, I'll always be a C-Rank and that's an unfair rating for me. If I get a strong golem, then that will be overturned.

The problem was that it took many years to create a golem and above all, many materials that didn't exist on earth were needed.

Kamekichi didn't know what to do by himself.

However, then what appeared there were "Les Éléments"'s Golem users.

Due to hundreds of years of independent research, "Cradle of the Sun" worked out a Dark Arts system that created golems in a relatively short period of time, moreover it only used materials that existed on earth. By combining the systematic knowledge that Zlatan had of it and the ideas that Kamekichi had envisioned, an even greater golem would be created—

– Well, to tell the truth, I deserve respect, no?

– Don't say it yourself....

Haruka was astonished.

However, the efforts of his former self should be acknowledged.

Maybe Moroha would praise this oddball as "the paragon of *Strikers*".

– Why are you being careless, Momochi?

Kamekichi got cocky, his face turned into the very picture of condescendence again.

– If we talk about talentless, then you certainly are at a level that is terrible to look at, no? Why don't you do your best so that each other's valley generation doesn't laugh at you?

With that same face, he arrogantly pointed out of the window.

What?

When she stood by the window, she saw the courtyard.

She didn't notice the noise because it was a soundproof building, but a crowd was forming.

Satsuki and Sophia were at the center of it.

They were sparring with each other, wearing *prana*.

Sophia, who always fought with bare hands, was holding a shield today.

It was a strange-looking, two-handed shield and huge enough to completely hide her tall figure.

It was made of hardened glass, but despite being that big, it didn't obstruct her view.

She had heard it was a combination of offensive and defensive equipment used by the brave man named Bernard, a late *Shirogane* of the Russian Division.

Moroha, who knew there were many spares in Vladivostok branch office, had been negotiating with the Russian Division far in advance and had one sent to him.

Sophia was going to try it immediately before the big operation.

She was famed as Iron Wall due to her toughness, but when holding a solid and giant shield, she felt intimidating enough to be called Citadel.

However, Satsuki didn't falter.

Being extremely energetic, she attacked from the front.

Sword and shield collided many times, their auras sparked brilliantly and a strong wind broke out in the surroundings.

Watching that, cheers arose from the regular "Saviors" of the Japanese Division.

The eyes of the adults were glued to the rapidly-growing first-year student and the third-year student whose true strength was ranked next to Isurugi. The person themselves were sweating, they looked pleased.

They were too dazzling for Haruka today... she was unable to endure it a second longer.

She involuntarily turned her back on the window.

- I got in your way, Mannendou. Do your best.

She turned her back on Mannendou and left the council room.

She hung her head and walked down the corridor.

—And.

She saw the feet of a girl obstructing her way.

- I was searching for you, Momochi-senpai.

Being called by her name, Haruka slowly raised her face.

It was Shizuno.

It wasn't Satsuki but a first-year student with a cheat-like strength.

It wasn't well known because she hid behind Moroha and also the person in question concealed it, but Haruka, who had participated in many battlefields with her, knew.

- Do you have a minute? I have something to talk about.

- You, with me?

What turn of events was this?

Her motivation had gone down, she ended up feeling awkward somehow, but she had no excuse to refuse.

- ... Sure.

- Then, as we walk.

Giving her OK, Shizuno gracefully turned on her heels.

Haruka nervously followed her kouhai that led the way.



- You refused to join the rescue team, huh.

Shizuno started talking.

She walked in the hallway with firm steps.

Feeling it was heard by someone who passed by, Haruka suddenly shivered. But unexpectedly, people weren't interested in others.

Seeing the indifferent look of the people passing through the corridor, she sighed with a feeling of relief while showing interest in it.

- Did you hear that from Moroha?

- No? But I could guess it. No matter how I look at it, it's impossible for the competent Senpai not to be chosen for the squad.

- I-it's not like I'm competent or anything...

Haruka ducked her head.



Then she stole a glance at Shizuno's face seen from the side.

It was as expressionless as usual, she had no idea what she was thinking.

- ... Isn't it bad that I refused?

- Why so? I'd say I'm jealous of Senpai, and that annoys me.

- ... What do you mean?

- As a *Kuroma*, I'm unable to use [Rentei], so I can't join the rescue team. I'm unable to save Moroha even if I want to. Isn't that humiliating?

Hearing so, Haruka noticed.

Shizuno's walk wasn't firm—she got annoyed and her steps became stronger than usual.

- If I were in Senpai's place, I would definitely go with Moroha.

She didn't hear like she was being criticized.

She got that from her tone of voice.

Maybe she was purely envious of Haruka and got angry at her own worthlessness.

- ... You really like Moroha, don't you?

Haruka muttered reflexively.

Saying so, she was taken aback and looked around.

She flustered, hoping she wasn't heard by someone who passed next to her.

There, Shizuno,

- Yes. I like him.

- What are you saying? What should you do if someone were to hear you!?

- Please calm down. It's not like it's a problem for me though?

Shizuno even had a hateful face.

With this, Haruka looked like a stupid.

- ... What would you do if it reached Moroha's ears?

Haruka pouted her lips.

- Moroha doesn't really take people's rumors seriously.

- Ugh...

Haruka thought that what was pointed out was quite so.

Moroha wouldn't listen to others unless he heard it directly from Shizuno's mouth. He was that kind of guy.

(This woman knows Moroha too well)

Haruka looked at Shizuno bitterly.

There,

- Even Senpai likes Moroha, no?

- What are you saying? What should you do if someone hears you!?

- Please calm down. There's no one else, is there?

Shizuno said nonchalantly.

Haruka was absorbed in the conversation, but by the time she realized, she was out of the building.

Together with a sigh of relief, she replied, feeling confused.

- I, I don't dislike him. But as a friend or as a companion...

Still, Shizuno was unresponsive.

An excuse like that was a stand that was not worth listening to.
(She! She's really bully!)

Haruka cursed at her in her heart and lost her nerve.

Shizuno just hurried forward.

And Haruka noticed.

Although Shizuno came inviting her to try talking while walking, her unhesitant pace seemed to have a proper destination.

Shizuno headed straight to an empty place behind the branch office.

It was a place more similar to a forest than a garden.

They set foot inside of it.

- Hey, where does this go?

- You'll know in a moment.

Shizuno answered without looking around at her.

In fact, it was like that.

From the depths of the forest, she heard a wind-cutting-like sharp voice.

- —Suraaa!

A unique shout of encouragement.

At the same time, a flash of white *prana* ran, leaving a trail.

It was from Moroha. Haruka grasped that immediately.

She grasped that an equivalent fighting spirit put into it was transmitted to her.

He was fighting. With whom?

But she couldn't feel it was tense.

Rather, it felt somewhat refreshing....

(What is he doing?)

Her curiosity rising up, Haruka hurried.

Then, as if the task was completed, Shizuno stopped walking without knowing why and went deep into the forest.

In the meantime, white flashes blinked dozens of times.

And Haruka saw.

Moroha wielded a sword with both hands and rushed through the ground, slashing his sword.

A dazzling *prana* ran on the blade.

A trail of white light ran in the empty space.

Fast. Powerful.

That one sword was enough to understand how high leveled Moroha was as a *Shirogane*.

His aim was a small, good-natured old man.

During the battle, he stroked his chin and acted with composure.

Moroha swung his sword diagonally from the shoulder and cut from above the old man's head.

However, when the blade approached him, the old man didn't move, he just stroked his beard.

Moroha's sword speed was terrific, it was no wonder he couldn't react—but.

As soon as he was slashed by the sword, the figure of the old man disappeared as if becoming mist.

□Ah!□When Haruka thought so, the old man moved behind Moroha.

Ancestral Arts Light Technique □Komon□.

What Moroha killed was an afterimage and not the old man.

– Tchheeeee.

From the stance he slashed the sword diagonally from the shoulder, Moroha immediately connected a twisting, slashing attack to the back.

As expected, unlike Haruka, he wasn't puzzled by the way of walking of the old man who made the afterimage.

He hit the old man behind.

His figure became blurred and disappeared. Again.

Two□Komon□ in a row.

The old man made Moroha slash the afterimage again and took a roundabout path to the back.

While blowing wind with composure!

– —Oooh.

Moroha let out a war cry.

He rotated one more time from the back twisting slash and connected a second back twisting slash.

His posture was chaotic. There was no sword skill at all in it.

With overbearing force, he swung the sword as if slamming it against him.

He cut the old man behind—his figure faded and disappeared.

Three in a row!

Astonished, Haruka opened her eyes wide.

The sword of Moroha, who cut the air, pierced the ground due to having excess momentum and stopped.

– Kuh...

A short groan leaked out of his mouth.

It became unbelievable all of a sudden.

That... that Moroha was being led around by the nose....

Seeing the old man getting behind Moroha once again, Haruka suddenly realized who he was.

(This old man is the Chinese Division Head)

Once called the □Savior□ among□Saviors□, he retired from active duty in less than two years and even now, four years later, the multiple military efforts of the *real legend* resounded within the White Knight Organization.

An SS-Rank Light Technique Master.

Haruka could do nothing but tremble with the wonderful performance of his □Godlike Movement□.

Among the 7 practical skills of □Godlike Movement□, □Komon□ was said to be the easiest.

However, it was a different story when it came to continuous use.

□Komon□ went from in a state of rest to top speed in an instant, or rather, it changed gears to the opposite and an afterimage was created by a difference in pace which was impossible for ordinary people.

If one repeated such absurd body movements two or three times, the burden would become outrageous and the legs would naturally come to a stop.

Each time one tried to create an afterimage, the difficulty level skyrocketed quickly.

Speaking of image, it was a normal □Komon□ that went over 5 vaulting boxes. A double was more than 10 vaulting boxes. A triple then felt like it was over 20 vaulting boxes maybe?

Haruka was an expert of □Godlike Movement□, but it didn't mean she could do double.

But bravery and the like were absolutely not usable in actual fighting.

If one failed and one's legs stopped, there would be no naïve enemy who would fail to notice that chance.

If it was about a triple, on an incredibly good day, and with a "no pressure playtime", it would be something she could do by retrying many times.

This old man—Tekka tried to do it very easily.

While the long sword buzzed, the good-natured old man stroked his beard. Seeing Moroha swing the sword against his will and throwing off the balance of his body,

- Are we done yet?

- What?

Moroha, from a disordered posture, kicked the left foot into the air as if springing up.

But what he hit was an afterimage too.

The fourth...□Komon□ in a row.

The old man, who took a roundabout path to the side, kicked Moroha's pivot leg to make him fall down.

However, and as if reading so, Moroha attacked with the sword with one hand while falling.

But what he cut off was nothing but an afterimage.

The fifth in a row...!

Looking like she was witnessing an incredibly ridiculous □Komon□, Haruka ended up half smiling.

- It is the end after all.

Tekka, who took a roundabout path to the other side, put his foot on Moroha who completely fell flat to pin him down.

There was a winner.

Haruka thought there was.

However, as soon as Tekka put his foot on him, the figure of Moroha became blurred then disappeared.

- Ho! A □Komon□ in that posture!

Tekka, who displayed composure, was surprised.

Haruka had the same opinion.

After all, Moroha was well outside the norm.

Moving from a lying-face-down state to a speed enough to create an afterimage, he ran around behind Tekka and thrust his sword at him instantly.

A blow that tried to go through the shortest distance at the fastest speed.

Tekka turned his head and immediately stopped the blow with his right index finger.

Ancestral Arts Light Technique [Kinu].

*TN: Kinu is an archaic way of saying Sun.

This was a sober but super advanced Light Technique. The tip of the sword and fingertip.

Point and point collided and fought each other head-on.

As if assuming the aspect of a blade lock.

Moroha clenched his teeth, mustered his *prana* and tried to push into it.

Tekka still had a detached attitude and stopped the blow with composure.

The *prana* that fought each other looked as if sparks danced down violently.

How much force and force collided with one another at that point? The aftermath reached even Haruka. It hurt like ripping her apart. The branches and leaves of the surrounding trees raged like a storm, cracks were carved in the tree trunks.

And the sword blade of Moroha's iron sword also had a small crack.

As they struggled, Tekka laughed like a good-natured old man.

- It seems that before getting to the bottom of it, my opponent won't be able to endure it.

He forced back the finger that caught the tip of the sword with a light movement.

With only that much, the body of Moroha was blown off to the back.

- Kuh...

While being blown away, Moroha held the sword vertically and took a guard stance.

Why? The very moment Haruka thought so.

The figure of Tekka appeared abruptly right in front of the blown off Moroha.

It was a strange scene, it felt like a movie that was made by cutting and connecting the frames of a film.

The highest derived technique of [Godlike Movement]. The secret technique.

Shukuchi's way of walking [Hagun].

In the blink of an eye, Tekka, who caught up with Moroha who was blown away by him, hit him from the top of the guard of the sword.

Although it looked like a light strike, a very low frequency sound resounded, the leaves of trees scattered everywhere.

Morooha, who was blown away to the back, was blown away with even more acceleration.

A scene that looked like a joke.

And Tekka caught up with him in the twinkling of a star.

Two □Hagun□ in a row.

The-way-too-surprised Haruka no longer knew what face she should have to watch this fight attentively.

Without caring about such spectator—

– Here is another one.

Tekka caught up with the blown-off Morooha with a composed face.

Three □Hagun□ in a row.

An aerial combo that lasted forever. Won't Morooha lose without being able to take a safe land like in fighting games?

It was nothing but a comedy nightmare.

At the point the growing-pale Haruka was staring at, Tekka fired a fist without consideration.

That was Morooha, and he, who was supposed to be unable to move in the air—suddenly dodged it by jumping sideways.

How did he do it?

– Hoo. What a smart action.

Tekka praised him.

Haruka also could understand it a little later.

Every time Tekka hit, the aftermath of the impacts caused countless leaves of trees to dance down.

Morooha **used** one of them **as a foothold** and jumped.

□Mongyoku□, the Shinsen way of walking that allowed one to walk on water, walls or everywhere.

– Impressive. I, who was a hermit way of living, is fascinated by you.

Tekka, who flew through the air, laughed out loud.

Morooha, who tried avoiding him, stamped on the ground as soon as he landed, rolled over and readied his sword again to counterattack.

He showed an unconventional third□Hagun□ and sprung from Tekka's side.

His figure divided into four.

A finishing blow that Haruka was also great at.

Swift and simultaneous consecutive attacks, □Donrou□.

An upward cut to the right, an upward diagonal cut to the right, a thrust and a bisecting cut from the head—Morooha, who bet all his power and made speed explode so that he was mistaken by his clones instantaneously, swooped down on Tekka from all sides.

Haruka involuntarily clenched her fists.

Normally, a powerful technique like□Hagun□ left a gap after being used.

That□normally□didn't apply to Tekka, but no matter how much of a Sennin he was, since he tried doing three of them in a row, he should be able to get some chance.

That was as thin as going through the eye of a needle, but a chance was a chance.

Unless he aimed and go, unless he bet on it, he wouldn't be able to win. Probably because even Moroha felt such a difference in true strength, Haruka felt as if she felt relieved with his manliness.

Looking at Moroha and the revitalization of his "Donrou", Tekka—

– Ho. Are you impatient?

His body multiplied by 8.

8 Tekka engaged the 4 Moroha.

A two-to-one composition occurred in four places.

Each of the four sword techniques released by the 4 Moroha were parried by 4 Tekka and their empty hands and the other 4 Tekka drove their opposite fists into them.

That was how it was reflected in the eyes of Haruka, but the result, if one went straight to the point, was that Moroha ended up receiving the four fists of Tekka.

– Kahah.

He dropped the sword and fell as if collapsing on the spot.

Unlike before, he wasn't blown off to the back.

He was hit with "Saturn", a Light Technique that only mowed consciousness.

There was a victor this time.

– Hey, pull yourself together.

Without enduring it, Haruka butted in and ran up to Moroha who fell face down.

Enduring the pain and sitting directly on the ground with bare feet, she lay his head in her lap.

She slapped his cheek, but there was no sign of him recovering consciousness.

– Worry not, give him 10 minutes and he will wake up. He was hit by that kind of wind.

Tekka smiled like a good-natured old man.

He probably realized long ago that Haruka was watching attentively. He wasn't surprised even when she got herself between them.

He grasped their relationship by seeing the Akane Academy uniform.

On the other hand, Haruka didn't know what Moroha and Tekka were doing.

– This guy pestered me to train with him.

Was it written all over her face? Tekka told her.

– Amazing....

Haruka was astonished.

Not that receiving the martial arts teachings of the lazy living legend was something one craved for?

– I owe him a favor. I didn't refuse.

Tekka smiled broadly as he stroked his beard.

- But since it's over, I couldn't help but have fun too. Since I was showered with the almost refreshing fighting spirit of this person, I feel clean, even the karma accumulated in my body.

Haruka didn't know what that "karma" was.

However, when thinking back upon the way of their fight, she did have to agree. They exchanged fearsome special moves and crashed into each other to the limits of their strength, but it didn't feel sad or gloomy at all.

The word "incredible match" seemed to fit it precisely.

The sleeping face of the defeated Moroha looked somewhat bright too.

- It was my first time seeing Moroha having his arm twisted from the front.

- Well, I've been training kung fu for 500 years. I can't be beaten by greenhorns.

Tekka raised his voice and laughed loudly.

- If we have 10 matches, I'll win all 10 of them. If we have fun like this.

- Eh?

Sensing the implication of Tekka's words, Haruka raised her face and asked a question in return.

- I have the upper hand in power and speed. The dexterousness of our techniques is the difference between heaven and earth. However, the strength of this person—the essence is that kind of thing, yes.

- If Dark Arts are extra points, is Moroha strong then?

- That's of no importance.

However, the good-natured old man denied it plainly.

Then what does that mean? Haruka suddenly felt curiosity.

Tekka looked down at Moroha.

With mirror-like eyes that revealed all the truth, he said.

- The real nature of this person is Asura.

It seemed to be... a metaphorical expression.

However, since it lacked too much concreteness, Haruka couldn't see it.

- Kill, destroy and overthrow—that's his duty. Do you understand? From my point of view, this guy, who fought briskly, is just like a baby. However, slaughtering until choking the life out of an opponent and being one of the two that stands at the end; if the match happens to be like that... then I will **never be rash with him**. I will run away to the end of a Bodhisattva's palms, to the end of the earth. I want to live a long life.

Tekka gave a supplementary explanation.

But in the end, it was incomprehensible.

Having a difficult face, Tekka laughed.

- It's no use even if you try conjecturing with reason. We're outside of that. The eyes turned towards her weren't cold as a mirror but warm like a gaze turned to his grandchild.

Being treated like a green, Haruka pouted her lips.

But as a matter of fact, from the point of view of this Sennin who had lived for 500 years, the 7 billion human beings were nothing but greens

When she thought so, the acid reflux went down and the pouting lips returned to normal.



Just as Tekka said, Moroha woke up exactly 10 minutes later. Haruka poked at his forehead who was examining the situation with sleepy eyes.

Then, and as if bursting open like a bubble, the eyes of Moroha opened completely.

- Mo-Momo-senpai?

He wondered why Haruka was there.

And why was she giving him a lap pillow?

He was surprised.

- I-I'm sorry. I'm getting up now.

- It's okay. It's okay. Tekka-san, the opponent, was quite difficult, no? Let's keep doing this for a while.

- I'm grateful... but Senpai's bare feet are too exciting for me.

- D-d-d-d-don't think of a lewd thing like that!

Haruka screamed and made Moroha's head get out of the way.

- It's bad for Momo-senpai to be way too defenseless 24/7. Because of that, even I'm embarrassed, but I had no choice but to say it myself.

Moroha protested while sitting upright himself.

- "Defenseless" is a very unpleasant expression!

- Then what should I say? □Momo-senpai, you are way too immature□?

- I'll beat you to death!

- Hey, you got angry. I'd say it's better than saying "defenseless".

They quarreled while sitting on the bare earth all together in the forest.

—They noticed that they were in a really idiotic situation.

- A-anyway. Thank you for the lap pillow. It was really pleasant. In a non-lewd sense.

- S-sure thing. In a non-lewd sense.

They reconciled while coughing excessively.

Their faces were still a bit red.

- By the way, where did Tekka-san go?

Moroha awkwardly changed the topic while sitting cross-legged.

- He went to take a break. He said he would come back in 30 minutes.

Haruka also sat cross-legged and told the words she was entrusted with.

- Ah, okay. Thank you.

The topic ended.

Or more precisely, an awkward air drifted.

- Say something, Moroha!

- Ah, sure.

Moroha honestly put his brain to work,

- Speaking of it, Senpai, you were watching us, yes?

He brought up the bout of some time ago.

Tekka noticed her, but Moroha seemed to have not noticed her.

- This is rare, you're quite perceptive.

That would be a proof that he was concentrated on the fight with Tekka.

- If it were the eyes of someone else, I think I would have noticed them.

When it comes to Momo-senpai, I usually let my guard down.

- I, I see.... It's that kind of thing, huh.

Haruka hurriedly stiffened the cheeks that seemed to have softened.

- I was able to see when you were viciously beaten.

Moroha scratched his head.

- Although I say so, you seemed to be having a great time.

- You understood that?

Haruka nodded.

- No matter what I do, I can't get through Tekka-san at all. On the contrary, a retaliation that surpassed my imagination by two levels came—

(Only two levels...?)

- Tekka-san seems to particularly put an emphasis on "Godlike Movement", but I was able to see it up close, it became incredibly informative—

The facial expression of Moroha who talked about it was much happier than ever.

It shone so much it became startling.

- Tekka-san said that if you were to have 10 matches, he would win them all.

Haruka cursed in order to suppress the disturbance of her palpitations.

- I guess so. Even if we had 100 matches, Tekka-san would win.

Moroha didn't deny it and scratched his head, looking blank.

But—

- If we had 1,000 matches, I don't know. I could get one. If we had 10,000, I might be able to get over 100. That's what I think.

He said so, giving a broad smile.

- The problem is that I don't have time to go for 10,000 bouts, it's just an impracticable theory.

He poked fun at his own words and adorned them with a joke.

His smiling face and his face seen from the side were dazzling to Haruka.

A young man, she thought.

Her chest became more and more painful,

- The first time I saw you, I knew you were that much of a tough guy. The guy who hates losing didn't have the chance to grasp it, huh.

She ended up striking him with a stronger abusive language.

- Haha.

Without looking like he cared at all, Moroha laughed loudly.

- Momo-senpai is tough too, right? How many bouts do you think we've had so far?

He suddenly wore a malicious face.

- Do you want to say that only I lose!?

Haruka sulked and got angry.

She got too angry because he hit the mark.

- Don't get too carried away! You're an S-Rank and an amazing guy, but I'll knock you down some day, so watch out!

Shouting tit for tat,

- ... Ah.

She became aware of her own words.

The way of the expression was different, but didn't she say the same thing that Moroha said a moment ago?

- We may be unexpectedly similar people, don't you agree?

The cross-legged Moroha looked up at the sky.

Haruka got enticed and looked up.

A blue sky spread exhaustively.

It was infinite but she felt a contradiction of wanting to see the end of it.

Human nature.

- It's been so exciting to have a bout with Tekka-san, I feel like I'm getting addicted to it.

(I also want to bout with you every day)

Embarrassed, Haruka was unable to say it, but it might have been transmitted in the atmosphere.

Moroha slipped out a chuckle.

(Similar people, huh...)

Haruka thought over those words while looking up at the sky.

Words she had never thought of until now.

Because Haruka was a *Shirogane* with poor talent and whose only redeeming feature was speed.

Moroha was the S-Rank [Ancient Dragon].

Haruka thought that he was a distant being that she couldn't catch up with no matter how hard she tried.

(No, I'm sure I can't catch up with him, but...)

Rather, she misunderstood.

For some reason or another, Haruka arbitrarily decided that Moroha was [incredible because he was an incredible guy].

But when thinking about it very carefully—Moroha also worked hard, he went to the limit.

He had never skipped a special practice after school using whatever worthless reason.

On top of that, Haruka often requested that she wanted him to accompany her in her personal special training.

She wasn't aware of it because the feeling of being taught was strong, but could it be that Moroha, who accompanied her, was training even more and as much as Haruka?

Moreover, Moroha went along with all sorts of personal training, including Satsuki, Sophia and Tokiko.

One could keep talking on and on.

(It's obvious that I can't catch up with him if I do my best as much as him)

She thought she was a hard worker.

Was it perhaps a ridiculous misunderstanding or conceit...?

Haruka turned her eyes to Moroha.

As she looked up at the sky, his face seen from the side was looking forward to Tekka's return.

She felt like being unable to stay there a second longer.

(I didn't have the opportunity to know and I didn't try to know...)

But at the same time, she wanted to stare at his face seen from the side forever.

To be able to know more about Moroha.

To be able to notice.

The throbbing in her chest raged even more, it went out of control.

She couldn't do it by herself.

Even her body got excited. She was so restless, she couldn't help but do something.

As expected, I do like Moroha! —Still, she didn't have the guts to say it.

Instead, Haruka said this.

- I'd like to join your training.

She stood up, turned in front of Moroha and asked while staring at his eyes.

- With pleasure.

Moroha agreed readily.

He held out his hand with a smile.

Haruka pulled it to let him get up.

She firmly clasped Moroha's hand without letting it go, without letting it go.

Tekka came back and the bout with the combination of Moroha & Haruka started.

- Are you really making an elderly person work too hard?

Tekka complained, but he didn't say no.

Tekka's strength was tremendous and even with the addition of Haruka, they were unable to compete with him.

Moroha got injured to the extent it was interesting with the two of them.

Every time Moroha was mowed down in one go, he smiled and looked at each other's face.

He was having fun from the bottom of his heart.

If it was with all his strength and if his feelings were earnest, then hitting and collapsing felt really good!

Before she knew it, the uncertain feeling held in her heart today was blown away.

Moroha seemed to have asked Tekka to train earnestly until the day before the operation.

Haruka had decided to accompany him until the end.

How many times would they lose in three days and in this condition?

Could they do it a hundred times?

But it didn't matter. By the time they challenge him the 100th time, they surely.

I'm confident that I'll have the courage to not run away from the hand that Moroha presented to me again—

Chapter 4: The night before the wild operation

Three days after *Strikers* got in Nagano.

The elite members of the British Headquarters finally arrived and all the "Saviors" participating in the operation massed at the Shiojiri branch office.

The total number of people was actually 356.

The breakdown was: British Division: 92 members. Japanese Division: 218 members. French Division: 46 members.

A military strength of this level concentrating in one place was unprecedented.

Looking at it from a different angle, if a "Metaphysical" were to appear elsewhere, it went without saying that they would have difficulty dealing with it. However, if they were really driven into a perilous situation, they could dispatch a force with Mari's "Transportal" so an audacious summoning could be done.

It wasn't an overstatement to say it certainly was a large-scale operation. It would be carried out tomorrow morning at 06:00.

The British Headquarters would divert and attack Statue, the Japanese Division would do so with Seven Horns and the French Division would do that as well with Anemone all at the same time.

Meanwhile, the rescue team led by Moroha was expected to infiltrate the labyrinth.

The forces of the three nations distracting the enemies had quite powerful diverting powers.

They were certainly able to form multinational mixed forces, organizing fighting power evenly, but they purposely avoided that.

Since cooperation was of much importance in the battle against "Metaphysicals", it was decided that each country doing it like they usually did, that is, being together and fight, was better.

Similarly, the Russian and American Divisions were requested to defend Europe only and not to send forces to this operation to avoid the worry of confusing troops from other countries any further.

Below that sort of scenery—

In today's evening, the leaders of the Japanese Division held an anti-Seven Horns strategy meeting, and both Isurugi and Mari were summoned.

Moroha wasn't summoned as he joined the rescue team.

The topic of discussion that ought to be determined was mainly a battle formation problem.

The assignment of frontline troops and reserve troops.

The thorough enforcement of division of roles and rotations and the formation of each platoon.

As that happened.

Isurugi walked down the corridor, heading to the small briefing room with Mari.

- You have quite a reliable expression, Isurugi-kun.

Said Mari who walked next to him.

Her facial expression was stiffened.

- Is that so? For me, it feels the same as usual.

- You know where we will be going from now on, so it is a reliable proof that you can be as you always are.

Mari winked, but it was obviously stiff, it wasn't the same as always.

- Even I was nervous the first time.

- You say that but this is the second time today, isn't it!? No matter how many times I attend, I don't get used to it.

Mari shrugged her shoulders, looking sulky.

While chattering pointlessly, the small briefing room came in sight.

Isurugi opened the heavy door and prompted Mari to get in.

- N-no no, you get in first, Isurugi-kun.

Having that requested by the diffident principal, Isurugi proceeded to go in first.

The inside wasn't that spacious.

A conference table was in the center of it and the tabletop was a monitor capable of displaying operational graphs.

Seven people were sit around it.

All of them were remarkable people.

Their demeanor, or more precisely, the atmosphere they were clad in, was immediately transmitted from them.

Suiting the seven of them, the air in the room got filled with tension, so much that it made them feel a physical mass.

Mari was still confused at the entrance.

Including both Isurugi and Mari, all the people in this place were A-Rank □Saviors□ of the Japanese Division.

The rude gazes of the seven people were fixed on them, increasing the heavy pressure.

- Uh...

Mari let out a groan right away.

Isurugi protected her by obstructing their gazes.

He entered the room very naturally and sat on an empty seat.

With a composed face without feeling anything in particular.

Mari just kept close to him, saying "Don't leave me behind!" and sat down next to him, curling herself up.

- We are late.

Isurugi greeted with his eyes.

As if they were one, the seven people talked all at once.

- Nah, we're just 5 minutes in. Don't worry.

- But let's start already.

- Not so fast. Since when all 9 members were present?

- It's been two years since the magic beast species, no?

- Are Mari-chan and Isurugi-kun okay?

The absurd chatting didn't stop.

As he looked this kind of thing, Isurugi thought that they were no different from children.

Mari, who curled herself up next to him, had a different opinion.

In the suddenly lightened atmosphere,

- Oh, Isurugi. You have been improving your skills rapidly these days, correct?

A big man in the middle of his forties, sitting in the chairman chair greeted him in a throaty voice.

His shoulder width was formidable, his pectorals were massive, and his bearded face looked like a bear. But,

- How about leaving that for later?

Making the gesture of swinging an air bamboo sword and not an air fishing rod was friendliness itself.

That person was Tabata Katsuie, the branch office head of the Chubu region Headquarters and Nagoya.

A skilled *Shirogane* who had been active since the establishment of the Japanese Division. He was also considered the strongest person within the Division until Moroha appeared.

In this operation, he served as the commander of the anti-Seven Horns troops.

Also, Tabata had a famous anecdote. He always self-introduced to the person he first met,

- My father likes historical novels and thus I, his son, was named "Katsuie" because the sound of "Tabata" is similar to "Shibata".

- Thanks to that, I'm a hairy and corpulent man as you can see. But I wanted to be born as a slender handsome man.

*TN: I'm kind of lost here. Both sentences are written as separate in the raw text, but they seem to be said by the same person.

And with a grumbling as the trademark routine,

- In the end, even the Japanese Division say "Then it's decided you are the head of Nagoya branch office, no?". Despite being a true Tokyoite. The

udon cooked in a broth containing miso paste is so good that I pull the soba in.

And threw a punch line and was set to be laughed at.

A man who couldn't help but make them feel nervous with his fierce look.

Isurugi met Tabata after the graduation last year when Tabata attended as a guest, but he still looked healthy.

He reported the present condition mixed with a strained laugh.

- The growth of the kouhais this year has been amazing. I can't let my guard down, can I?

- Yes, that "Ancient Dragon", isn't it? I also wanted to meet him calmly, taking this chance, but the old man doesn't leave him alone.

- It's not just Haimura-kun. Inspired by him, many are growing fast.

- It's refreshing, refreshing indeed. Graduate fast and come to us. So we can be at ease too.

Tabata laughed loudly.

Some people appear, saying "Without doubt", smiling broadly.

Mari was finally able to calm down.

There—

- No matter how many greens graduate, there's no way we can be at ease.

The stubborn voice not only stirred up the mood in the place, it even poured poison into it.

Everyone's attention gathered at the woman who let that voice out.

Isurugi also glanced at her with an ironic(ish) feeling.

A talented woman both in literary and military arts who was the first secretary of the Head of the Japanese Division and who acted as his bodyguard.

She was Takanashi Kyouko.

Just a few days ago, she was the person responsible for tricking Moroha and imprisoned him in the mansion of the "witch of the prison".

He had heard that with that reckless behavior, she received a suspension from work, but in this situation, it was necessary to have as many dexterous people as possible, so her punishment was cancelled and joined the operation.

- Tabata-san, will you ever refrain from saying such pathetic statement?

Takanashi glared at the chairman seat two seats away from her.

When someone muttered "It's just a light greeting. Cut it out", this time, she thrust her gaze at them.

- What you are saying is both good and bad. We were humbly given A-Rank by Suruga-sama, no? And yet, you don't understand that the statement you're saying feels as if you're making light of us and as such you are making light of Suruga-sama's authority? It is impossible for me to forgive you.

Takanashi got angry, spoke sharply and continued criticizing.

Someone muttered "Everyone but you gets it" again and she thrust her gaze at them.

- Tabata-san, you are the general who represents Suruga-sama who cannot leave Tokyo and who was entrusted with the army, right? I would like you to have more dignity without forgetting that.

- I'm not good at being ceremonious.

As Tabata waved his hands, he trembled at Takanashi's sharp gaze.

This was a pathetic attitude that didn't match his physique, but no one laughed.

Tabata's last position was the commanding officer of the fire department special rescue team, so he was full of courage and sense of duty, and he was well known in the Japanese Division for taking care of others and the good quality of his character. He wasn't just a strong *Shirogane*. Of the nine people here, no one but Tabata would be discontent about being the president. Everyone except Takanashi understood that.

- I sense Suruga-sama's true motives behind Tabata-san being absolutely necessary entrusted with this. I have no choice but to get Kashiwaba Gen'ichi come back soon.

Takanashi continued making cynical remarks to the very end.

And when the name of "Kashiwaba Gen'ichi" came out, the majority of the ones who were in this place had stumped-looking faces.

The only one who was calm was Isurugi as he wasn't acquaintance of his. Although he knew that great name well.

Kashiwaba Gen'ichi. The former Office Head of the Japanese Division Internal Audit Office.

A man who displayed his sharpness in a department that kept a watchful eye day and night on things that were related to illegal activities and on humans in the Division abusing hidden "Ancestral Arts".

He was the greatest user of "Godlike Movement" in the Japanese Division. Consequently, he excelled at covert abilities and anti-personal abilities, he also was feared by his surroundings.

While he excelled at those two things, his strong point was assassination.

He actually never had to assassinate someone, but it was the best as a deterrence.

He had heard that Kashiwaba was able to maintain order when the Japanese Division was just recently built thanks to him exercising his authority by means of "fear" while the righteousness and ethics of the "Saviors" hadn't permeated yet.

Anyway, even as a strong person who represented the Japanese Division since its Genesis, admired by his surroundings due to his personality, he was a person that was the extreme opposite of the leading Tabata.

- Well, for the sake of Yatsuko-san, let's start the meeting soon.

Tabata took the lead as he tapped his left shoulder.

Triggering those words, the atmosphere changed again.

Some straightened their posture and others made fighting spirit burn in their pupils even though they still felt listless.

Takanashi seemed to look even more displeased, but she didn't object anymore.

Isurugi also straightened up his back and faced the meeting.

18 eyes focused on the virtual battle outline drawing projected on the whole table—

– I'm sorry, as for Akane Academy's *Strikers*, I will turn them to reserve.

That was what Tabata began to say when the meeting got heated.

The topic of discussion extended to the distribution and formation of personnel and was picked up before anything else.

Based on the standard development of the White Knight Organization when fighting a *Dreadnought* class, only B-Rank *Shiroganes* or higher constituted the frontline troops.

C-Rank *Shiroganes* were reserve units. Their main role was to guard the *Kuroma* Forces, which were the cornerstone of their firepower, and to make an insertion to support the front line when a trouble occurred.

They couldn't be unprepared, but it could be said that their duty was relatively less dangerous.

– If it's because we're still regarded as students, there is nothing we can do.

Isurugi calmly opined without getting worked up or trusting too much.

– Most of the people in the team are B-Rank, and more than anything, we have experience as we battled against a Fortress class once.

– That is true. But you still haven't participated in a large-scale operation, have you? For that reason, there's an opinion that you will see afterwards with which I have agreed with too.

Tabata explained as he tapped his right shoulder.

Whose opinion was that—he barely felt shadiness.

And immediately got an answer.

– I suggested it.

Takanashi bent her lips.

Seeing this was just as he thought, Isurugi stared fixedly at Takanashi.

However,

– Sorry. I got something to say.

Another hand was raised.

A woman in her mid-twenties wearing a tank top.

In the seat between Tabata and Takanashi, she leaned on the back of the chair disrespectfully and swung the chair back and forth.

The well-tanned woman, who gave the feeling of being a black wild animal, was the branch office head of Kyushu Headquarters and Hakata.

Her name was Wadatsumi Kaya.

She was a reputed top ace in western Japan.

– If we make those guys, who don't know the battlefield, move around, it will be difficult to surround it.

And Kaya scratched her armpit.

Voices saying "I see" were heard from the rest of the people—from those who were mainly entrusted with western Japan.

As Isurugi continued surveying those two for a short while,

– Understood. We will get to learn with the reserve unit.

He didn't argue in particular and accepted.

This was his judgment as the captain. He had no reason to get worked up and say "No, put us on the front line" here.

It was unpleasant that one of the proponents was Takanashi, but it made some sense.

He thought so, but,

– Well, listen to me to the end. Your power is needed on the front line. I will only put Isurugi in my platoon.

Tabata ordered as he tapped his left shoulder.

Isurugi turned a sharp gaze.

That wasn't a funny demand.

It was unmistakably meaningless to leave an A-Rank *Shirogane* idle in the rear. It was unnecessary to think about it.

As if to finish the conversation, Tabata tried to move on to the next topic.

– Please wait.

Isurugi raised his hand to stop that.

– As the Captain of *Strikers*, I cannot accept having members deployed beyond the reach of my sight.

He raised an objection with a firm tone of voice.

Unlike the last conversation, he was unable to ignore this.

– The reserve unit side won't face great danger, will they? Besides, isn't it just a gathering of students? Then you won't have to take care of each and every one of them.

– The opponent is a "Metaphysical". And practically an unprecedented Fortress-class "Metaphysical". Concluding ahead of time that there won't be great danger is unforgivable.

Isurugi recalled the time of the summer camp when they battled with a Fortress class.

The opponent they thought was a giant insect species was actually a multi-headed species and changed the attack method, but if it weren't for Moroha, they would have been driven to the point of complete defeat.

– Haimura-kun has already been picked up by the rescue team. I will fight together with *Strikers*. I am not saying this out of selfishness. Please understand that.

– I don't think you're being selfish. But understand this. 200 lives depend on us. I can't let the way I thought was best bend.

Tabata ordered in an easy-to-understand manner.

He said he disliked being ceremonious, but he was by no means an irresponsible man.

Rather, he was a hero who seemed to have an iron and consistent stand point.

- I am also responsible for taking care of the team. I will not yield.
Isurugi deliberately and decisively refused.
And silence.
Mari looked at him, feeling nervous.
The rest of the people seemed to be surprised at the unexpected crash.
The air got filled with the smell of gunpowder with every passing moment.
- Isurugiii—
Tabata stopped tapping his shoulders.
He placed both fists on the table.
And got up slowly.
He carefully observed, made his power of observation overflow, and bared his fangs.
With a low and unsettling voice, like a fierce animal howling,
- —I asked you, and yet, you aren't listening to me?
He threatened.
A beast-like intimidating air was released with a rattle from his whole body.
The already large body appeared to have swollen up many times.
It could be said it was a complete change from his friendly attitude until now.
Gasps were heard from here and there.
Not only Mari, all the tough guys in this place cowered and flinched from that to a greater or lesser extent.
Even Takanashi, who had the dignity to keep speaking ill of him to that extent, solidified.
This was Tabata Katsuie.
Since the establishment of the Japanese Division, the man who went through many near-death experiences had an atrocious majesty.
Taking it directly, Isurugi couldn't help but receive the impact.
(This person... was **like this**...?)
An impression he was an even stronger and scarier □Savior□.
He didn't feel anguish even if he was threatened with a beast-like expression now.
On the contrary, Tabata trying to make himself look bigger and doing the best he could do looked even touching.
(Even if he doesn't act like that...)
A scene flashed back in Isurugi's mind.
Yes.
For example, If he were facing Lu Zhixin here....
That man didn't have a fake ghastliness.
Far from displaying a big body, his category, to put it bluntly, would be "shorty".
Far from losing his temper, he smiled without impressiveness.
With an easygoing attitude, he readied his fists as if jesting. With only that much—
Thinking back upon that, Isurugi was suddenly struck with terror.

Sweat spouted out. More than a week had passed since then. But still. Being pulverized with just one hit was a truly horrifying experience. But experiencing it wasn't meaningless. Isurugi calmly believed so while gazing at Tabata who bared his fangs. (Now, what do I say to make them understand?) As everyone's faces stiffened, he began to contemplate while having room to smile bitterly.

And—A loud sound was made all of a sudden behind him. The door was thrown open without any advance warning. Isurugi turned his head. Tabata and the others noticed all at once. An intruder who disregarded the "In a meeting" sign appeared without knocking. An unexpected visitor nobody expected. He stood up at the doorway with an arrogant attitude and glared at them. He was Charles Saint-Germain, the Head of the French Division. Two people were by his side, he was accompanied by Cathedral Knights who wore black hoods and masks of goat skull. Faster than Isurugi wondering what he was doing there, with impatience, – Listen. I have a request for you. This statement didn't read the air. No. This supernatural person possessed an aura that ended up repainting the air with just a few blunt words. "We're in a meeting. Leave" Even Tabata wasn't able to say such simple words. He was sweating and stiffening. Isurugi also felt he got goosebumps. Despite being no different from ordinary people in terms of physical ability, the leader of *Kuromas* stood proudly in one place. If anyone in this place were to incur this man's displeasure, the room would immediately turn into ashes and they would be massacred. Isurugi could grasp that on his skin. (This... yes, this...) Touched by the cleverness, his body stiffened and for some reason, his heart was invigorated. He stared at Charles with awe. Tabata and Mari were like him. However, without being concerned about such gazes, Charles requested to the chairman Tabata. – Lend me your troops. We're all□Dark Saviors□. We need a meat wall to fight. A manner of speaking that sounded arrogant and on top of that insolent. – That's not our problem. There are many of them over here, so won't that split us too much? Despite being overpowered, Tabata insisted on what should be said. This time, this was the sense of responsibility and courage people admired.

- I know. It's not like we need that many. Just enough to become a burden.
One team is all I ask.

- ... You're okay with one team?

Tabata frowned.

It's absurd.

So reckless.

It's incomprehensible.

Such whispers were leaked out from here and there.

Without caring about their feelings, Charles got cocky.

Instead, the □Les Éléments□waiting on the right side moved.

A big man of more than 2 meters tall.

He pointed at Isurugi.

And Charles said.

- This guy. Lend me the damn brats of Akane Academy. Understood?

He asked for *Strikers*.

No way! The room got noisy.

- Impossible!

Takanashi changed her complexion and stood up.

- They're no more than children, they aren't useful! I will immediately choose the *Shiroganes* acknowledged by—

- Control yourself, servant! Who allowed you to speak directly!?

The giant knight scolded her in a loud voice and made her shut up.

Dejected, Takanashi sat down. She looked around while signaling with the eyes, as if to say□Someone object instead of me□but nobody responded.

Takanashi grimaced in vexation.

On the other hand, Mari grabbed Isurugi's sleeve and began to say, worried.

- Can we refuse?

Tabata agreed with that.

- Yes, you don't have to overextend yourself. If it's one group then we're good to go.

Without replying immediately, Isurugi looked at Charles' eyes.

Then the French supernatural man smiled with contempt,

- What do you think, sonny? Are you confident that you have what it takes to hold up the front line and fight with us on your back?

He provocatively stared back at him.

Isurugi got invigorated again, he was in breathless suspense.

If he thought about it very ordinarily—

From the point of view of a man like him, they probably were no more than stones on the side of the road, the only exception being Moroha.

Probably it wasn't worth provoking him.

This is what they call heart is won by heart!

(Of course, pride can do it too)

Even if he was still immature by himself, the unified strength of *Strikers* was the real deal.

Isurugi concealed the excitement in his mind and returned a provocative objection.

- We'll be bitter enemies in the same boat, huh. It's not a problem for me... but supposing our true strength isn't up to the task and we collapse, are you actually prepared for that? Can you think about that?

- What are you spouting out?

Charles immediately made a face as if he had swallowed a bitter bug.

He suddenly slurred his words and spat out.

- Paris Saint-Germain will be on the battlefield and you say you'll fall behind like the □Metaphysical□? If you're going to have needless worries, then go get a cancer insurance too.

Hearing that, the knight who was waiting on the left side spouted out.

- You dishonest!

With a laughing voice, it turned out the knight was a woman.

Turning the eyes under the mask to him, and with a friendly tone of voice,

- We know your real strength best. We crossed swords with you, didn't we?

If you guys cooperate with us, then as it is called in Japanese, you, who are strong, will be even stronger, no?

Charles changed his facial expression in a twinkle.

- W-who said a thing like that and when!? Don't translate as you please, Chloe!

He yelled, making saliva fly, but the female knight ignored him.

- Don't you think?

She just asked him for his approval.

Of course, the reply of Isurugi was determined.

- Let's work hard to become good metal rods.

- Then we are the ogres? You are mean.

*TN: Both sentences are references to "making something strong even stronger". The literal translation is "ogres and metal rods".

The female knight smiled free from worry.

- Nonsense. Don't start a tedious talk. It's a waste of time.

Charles turned away as if he had become sulky and immediately left while mumbling.

He suddenly came and arbitrarily left.

An impatience beyond their expectations.

The two knights bowed and ran after him.

Isurugi turned around to the chairman seat.

A bitter face was there.

□This guy comes and does whatever he pleases!□ was written on his face, and □But, well, I don't hate him□ was written too.

Tabata said this out loud.

- You can't go. You need to discuss it with that person.

With that same bitter face, he powerfully showed a person out.

Kyouko clamored something, but she gave permission without caring about it.

- Thank you for your understanding.
Together with a bow, Isurugi turned on his heel.
He pushed the heavy door open to run after Charles and company.



After the meeting, and moving to an unpopular place, Takanashi Kyouko argued.

No, it was a one-sided attack rather than an argument.

Kyouko's screaming voice echoed in the unused multipurpose room.

- Why didn't you stop him with me!?

It was exactly the appearance of a demoness who glared extremely angry at someone.

- Don't be silent, say something, Kaya!!

She thrust her finger and accused her.

The other party—Wadatsumi Kaya, who thrust a finger into one ear and turned away, replied while yawning.

- You said they shouldn't put the damn brats on the front line, so I just went with it and said it with you. If they aren't going to become an obstacle for us, then it doesn't matter where they'll fight.

- That's terrible! I explained it to you, didn't I? If those brats are able to do a great job in a big stage like this, then they will grow up more and more, no!?

- Sorry. I didn't pay attention to such a thing. I'm not interested in your position, power struggle, preferences or whatever.

- But it's connected to Suruga-sama's position!

- He has such a boring personality, doesn't he?

- That's not the problem.

- Then what's the problem?

- This isn't the moment to explain that! Anyway, even Kaya was betrayed many times by Urushibara Tadanori, right? You don't want that man and Akane Academy to have everything their way, do you!?

- I'd love to gruesomely kill that damn Tadanori. But since Mari-chan became the principal, that school has changed. Those guys who came this year are the highlight. I have no grudge towards them.

- Are you sane, Kaya!?

- Kyouko isn't the sane one here. You said it, but now you still have a very small chance, right? Suruga-sama is generous, but he hates incompetence, doesn't he?

- I do know that! That's why I'm getting impatient!

Kyouko yelled hysterically.

- Good grief. It seems like you don't get at all what I said. I'm done.

As if being amazed, Kaya left of her own accord.

She broke down.

Kyouko hit the window in frustration.

In the past, they polished their Light Techniques together and worked as the bodyguards of Suruga Andou.

As Kyouko increased the sympathizers in the main office of the Japanese Division, Kaya began to distance herself from her and with the recognition of being an A-Rank as a chance, she volunteered for Hakata branch office head and went to the far west.

(... Now that it has come to this, I have no choice but to do *that*)

Kyouko mumbled as she gazed at the outside scenery.

The face of the demoness, the dark facial expression she had, was reflected in the window.

It was created whether or not it was executed.

In this operation, the "Witch of the Gate" Shimon Mari was one of the key persons.

Putting herself in a safe location, she would wait for the rescue team to prepare the anchor of □Transportal□.

There, Kyouko made a plan to apply to be the personal protector of Shimon Mari.

Being confident to deceive with words, the reason was □Seeing that the mastermind of the □Metaphysicals□ was identified, they might do something to strike the essential point of this operation□or something like that. The one who would really hurt Shimon Mari was Kyouko.

She would pretend to have been injured, fabricate a fictitious criminal and commit a crime.

What would happen next?

The rescue team and Haimura Moroha, the one she hated, would be unable to escape with the gate not opening and they would be at a loss whether to advance or retreat.

Once it was known that the rescue team was imprisoned, it would be impossible to say that they could keep diverting the enemy.

They would have no choice but to abandon the rescue of those who got their souls pulled out and start attacking the labyrinth from outside.

While knowing that Haimura Moroha and company were inside!

The people who got their souls pulled out would be sacrificed, but Kyouko would say that was the way it was and that something like that was okay as

they were sacrifices from the beginning. Only 100 people, moreover, the ones that became the source of "Metaphysicals".
The White Knight Organization sometimes gave too much priority to humanity and the hypocrisy that diverted its attention from efficiency was disgusting.

(Yes... that's the only way to proceed)

Kyouko strengthened her resolve.

If so, and first of all, she had to apply to be relocated to Tabata.

She stamped her heels and left the multipurpose room.

(Hmm...?)

And she found a suspicious person.

In a bit distant place, a boy was sitting in a corner of an unpopulated corridor, playing with a smartphone.

He wore the uniform of Akane Academy.

She froze for a moment, wondering if he had heard the verbal dispute not long ago, but there was no sign of that.

It seemed that emails were constantly coming, he was absorbed in replying to them.

If he were reporting to someone, he would have probably disappeared quickly without being confused in a place like this.

(How was this kid called?)

She dug up the memory of the profile files that Akane Academy regularly presented.

A boy with a totally womanizing-like and refreshing-to-the-point-of-being-disgusting face seen from the side.

("... I can't remember")*

*TN: All three of them, when it comes to names/surnames/given names, start with Take, but the third one corresponds to his name. Taketsuru in case you forgot.

Surely, even though he was a *Striker*, he was a plain *Shirogane* with nothing but insignificant abilities.

Her memory was vague, but she couldn't help it.

She decided not to give a damn now.

- You're working hard, aren't you?

She slightly bowed, putting sarcasm into it and passed in front of the boy whose name couldn't remember.

- Yes!

The boy also returned a bow with no manners.

If only they were beaten from behind by Charles and company tomorrow!

Kyouko was indignant but she regained calm right away.

(I'm looking forward to seeing how you all will cry and the faces you'll have tomorrow)

What would happen if the brats of Akane Academy, who had fallen into a Haimura Moroha addiction now, were to lose their ray of hope?

Imagining so, she found relief in the dark pleasures.
And curved her lips in an evil manner.
Suddenly a large amount of blood was spat out from her mouth.



The final meeting of each force had ended, the commencement of the operation would be the next day, so the only task the warriors had was to rest well.

Despite that.

Even though it was about to get dark, the courtyard grew noisy with shouts of joy and people.

The sounds of a sword fight resounded several tens of times.

The single-edged iron sword swung by Moroha and the fantastic large sword that Edward mowed down clashed directly opposite.

White and purple *prana* glittered each time and the waves of the impacts caused the hair of the spectators to move backwards.

The impressive face-off between S-Rank and S-Rank.

But this was just a warm up for the two of them.

So much that Edward wasn't wearing armor.

Moroha did this to confirm the results of the training with Tekka over the last three days.

Edward faced him long ago, so this was to confirm the growth of Moroha.

One game, they just talked about sparring.

The spectators gathering in rapid succession and the overflowing clamor were beyond discretion.

□If that's the case, can you catch this amazing blow?□

Showing a daring smile, Edward slashed at him from above.

A desperate blow with all of his might but full of gaps.

He looked.

There! Moroha seemed to have countered him, but in the end, Edward protected himself with □Sun□, so, at this rate, he would end up cutting him right in half.

If that's the case! Catching it foolishly honest with the sword would be just as Edward expected. Saratiga, which was still an iron sword, would end up breaking. He felt that much power.

□Not a chance!□

Morooha stuck out his tongue while doing a big back step and escaped from the range of the long large sword of Edward.

□I got you!□

His face got right in front of Morooha in an instant.

In spite of certainly being a Tank type, it was like cheating since this man's specialty was Shukuchi's way of walking □Hagun□.

It distorted the concept of distance between opponents called martial arts, put his rhythm out of order and tackled Morooha from the top of the shoulders.

However, it was an afterimage of Morooha.

It was Edward who was attacked in his unguarded moment, making a face that said □Uh oh!□

□I'm tired of looking at that technique□

Morooha, who took a roundabout path to the back, slashed at him from the upper right.

Immediately after using a technique such as □Hagun□, Edward couldn't move right away.

He pulled the sword and drove the back of the blade right behind him.

A bright white flash of light exploded, this was Morooha's *prana*.

- Guh...

However, it was Morooha who showed suffering.

Edward's back was absurdly hard and the impact of hitting it returned to the wrist.

□I call it an excellent predictable pattern□

Edward turned around while being triumphant.

As he was unable to move about and with a technique that was just right in the middle of □High Durability□ and □Sun□, he concentrated his defense only on his entire back, protecting him against Morooha's blow.

As expected of the first-class toughness of the White Knight.

□If it annoys you, why don't you use □Hagun□? Don't tell me you can't use it, can you?□

□I don't like it□

Morooha, whose surprise attack failed, stepped back and got poised again for charging.

□Hagun□ was a Shukuchi's way of walking that created gaps from even gapless opponents.

The downside was that if he couldn't bring him down, or in the worst case, it was dodged, he wouldn't be able to move due to the recoil from releasing a powerful technique, his hands would hurt and would end up eating a retaliation.

In Edward's case, with his excellent defense ability that could be said was his ground, he was calm even if he was in a situation in which he couldn't move. Moreover, when he wore Argusten, he used it as much as he wanted. As for Tekka, who gave a try using a technique of another dimension like three □Hagun□ in a row, it seemed that a recoil when using the powerful technique was unrelated to him. That was a possible action because he was a Sennin who abandoned karma and body.

Morooha wasn't like that.

□Hagun□ could only be fired once.

He was unable to stomach something like forcibly creating a gap from a gapless opponent with such a big gamble.

Gaps and whatnot could be created as much as he liked with ingenuity.

At any rate, if he was going to give it a shot, it was better to bring the opponent down soundlessly.

So—

Morooha started spelling with his left hand while holding the sword in his right hand.

– That shapeless blade That invisible inscribed sword—

A chanting.

Edward reacted to it,

□How boring. Just when it was finally getting exciting. Let's just go sword against sword. Your petty trick will be crushed from the front, you know?□

He pulled a wry face and reduced the distance.

His movement of raising the sword overhead was more compact and faithful to the basics than a moment ago.

That was why there were no gaps.

Exactly like the sword of a champion. The “shallow petty trick”, as it was declared, would be shattered and overpowered.

(But what will you do if it's not shallow?)

Morooha saw that the raised sword reached the top and entered the swinging downward trajectory,

– —Come, ripper.

He hit the light characters written in the empty sky with his left hand.

□Breeze Blade□.

He unleashed a sharp blade-like wind, striking Edward.

□Did you forget? Dark Arts take their time. If I look carefully at it and measure the timing, I'll be OK□

Edward exposed himself to the fangs of the raging wind right in front of him.

The Noble Violet *prana* he was clad in enhanced its radiance in an instant and repelled the blade of gust of wind.

Edward was completely unharmed.

This was his specialty, the instant perfect defense—the Light Technique□Moon□*.

*TN: This is also an archaic version of moon, gyokuto.

It was an ultra-high defense technique that tormented Moroha when they fought for the first time.

□Of course I haven't forgotten□

Standing in front of the roaring, fantastic large sword, Moroha hit the ground with the tip of his right foot without getting confused or panicking. To be more precise, the ancient magic characters he wrote on the ground with his toes were a second row of □Breeze Blade□.

□Uoooo...□

Edward ate the storm and was blown backwards.

He tried to kill the momentum by standing firm on both legs right away, but he was unable to hold his ground immediately.

□This Jack-in-the-box...!□

He glared at Moroha and smiled gruesomely.

Since his first fight with Edward, Moroha began to put his creativity to work in relation to his spelling methods during battle.

As he said, Dark Arts were frustratingly slow in a combat speed range of a *Shirogane*.

To make up for this, he came to the point where he could spell 1st Rank Dark Arts on the floor using his feet, and if it was the same Dark Art, then he was also capable of spelling it at the same time using his left hand.

And what he learned recently was this delay trigger.

Since the□strong image of the generated event□that was necessary for the exercise of Dark Arts became blurred, making a big delay was still impossible. It was less than a second at best.

Still, regarding the speed range of a *Shirogane*, if there was a delay of a second or even a fraction of a second, it was possible to come up with a one-two punch combination as it was called in boxing.

In fact, Edward's □Moon□ was an undefeatable art for an instant only, so he was unable to defend against the □Breeze Blade□that was released a moment later.

Edward stood firm in the windstorm as he made a rut of a few meters on the ground.

It was a big opportunity.

It wasn't that Moroha missed it, but the next spelling was over.

The chanting was omitted.

In just a few seconds, an imperfect □Decrease Weight□brought his weight near zero.

But now a few seconds was enough.

By means of Dark Arts, Moroha pseudo abandoned his karma and body and reached the area of the Shinsen—

- Ooh....

He accelerated together with a scream.

The excitement of the spectators also welled up with the climax today.

For them, it was as if Moroha's body had been divided into **9**.

Swift and simultaneous consecutive attacks, "Donrou". 9 clones.

He hit nine points of Edward's body from 9 directions with the back of the sword.

With that momentum, he ran past him to his back, swung the sword and sank it in the lower back, in the same posture he was.

He couldn't move for a moment due to the recoil from releasing a powerful technique.

A grand applause from the spectators broke out.

Praises never stopped towards Moroha who had demonstrated a technique of a different dimension and made 9 clones with a delayed Dark Arts.

One person in that situation,

"Hmm..."

Edward groaned, sounding displeased as he cocked his head.

Moroha turned around and Edward also turned to him.

Even after being showered with 9 consecutive attacks, he was as if nothing had happened.

"I thought the delayed attack of Dark Arts was great, you know?"

He traced one of the fine cuts carved in his whole body by the swings of the blades and stared at his reddened fingertip,

"What was that last "Donrou"? Maybe you were inspired by the old man, but the power was too light"

Then grumbled as he rubbed the place that was struck by the swords one after another.

There were various factors that determined the slashing power, but body weight was also an important factor.

Moroha gained enough lightness to be able to make 9 clones by means of "Decrease Weight", but the downside was that the power of each blow ended up decreasing dramatically.

The fist of Tekka, which should be light like the body weight, was actually heavy, but this was probably thanks to the unique way to swing Chinese martial arts had. Lu Zhixin also used that secret technique, the "*hit*" was so powerful despite looking like it was just a light hit.

"Come now, the reason you carefully hit nine points of my body is that it was a countermeasure against the kind of way I used to protect my back above the rest, no? However, if the power of one hit is so trivial, then I can entirely prevent it with an ordinary "High Durability". Doesn't that make it meaningless?"

Probably because he was much dampened, Edward said persistently.

Moroha didn't particularly explain it. He just scratched his head.

Then, Edward made a face like he suddenly noticed something and was no more discontent.

"I'm very sorry, Jack doesn't know about such thing, does he?"

He grinned embarrassedly as if he were lecturing to the Buddha.

And then, a sudden transformation: he made a face like a child who got toys showed off to him,

□At any rate, you're planning something again, no? And for that, you turned me into a guinea pig? I'm not honored! While I'm at it, if you can reveal how the trick works, will you tell me about it please?□

□Well, I'm still practicing it. Next time□

□Don't be so stingy! Leaving things undone is cruel!□

Edward complained, but Moroha didn't pay attention to him.

The spectators seemed to be dissatisfied, but explaining his technique while getting such level of attention—he couldn't because he was extremely embarrassed.

□Enough! I'm telling Angela after this!□

□Wai, hey, bringing up Angela-san is foul□

The figure of AJ being angry and launching an attack on him vividly came to his mind, making him frown.

Seeing his facial expression, Edward spouted out.

□Haha, although I wasn't serious, to think it would have an immediate effect like that. Everybody has one or two people they are no match for□

□Obviously. Why are you saying "catching a youngster like me"?□

Moroha frowned even more.

Edward seemed to feel completely relieved.

□Haah, I sweated a lot. Since I got tired and failed to evaluate things properly, should we bring the sparring to an end here?□

The mood dispersed with his words.

The spectators scattered as they discussed and reacted unanimously with satisfaction as if they had seen a masterpiece movie.

As Edward also shouldered the large sword,

□However, when we fought before, when it came to our swords, I was better than you. Now we're pretty much evenly matched□

□You said it well. I was able to have a good match with you because you weren't wearing your armor, but that's nothing to be proud of□

□Hahaha! I'm praising you so I hope you can accept it honestly!□

Edward left while waving his hand.

□I can't trust your frivolous mouth□

Moroha saw him off while sticking out his tongue at his back.

In fact, he was just bored of being flattered.

Moroha had no particular need of others' praises.

He raised his face while indulging in a non-serious meditation.

His eyes traced the walls of the building in the immediate vicinity, they climbed up higher and higher and reached the rooftop.

Satsuki and co. were there, bending half of their bodies on the fence while rooting for Moroha's sparring.

When they noticed Moroha's gaze, they waved their hands.

There was no need for praises or the like.

The girls' support was more than enough for Moroha.

The rest was a waste for him, so it wasn't needed.



On the other hand, on that rooftop—

- Moroha has his eyes fixed on me.

Leshya, who waved her hand with a movement that closely resembled a metronome, whispered to herself.

- Huh? What if you go buy some glasses? He has his eyes fixed on me, no? Satsuki, who waved her hand with a movement that closely resembled a puppy's tail, flared up at that opinion.

The two of them, who tried to bend forward from the fence, immediately looked at each other's face, giving off sparks with their eyes.

- I'd say that the degree of your contact lenses don't match you?

- I have no contact lenses! Well, that's natural□? Even if I close my eyes, my skin is oversensitive to the hot gaze of Moroha, you know?

- I see, then you're pointing out a situation in which you sleep even with your eyes open, yes? Thank you for your wild delusion.

- Don't look at me like I was a poor giiiiirl.

They continued screaming and quarreling like that.

Shizuno, who was watching Moroha's sparring from the top of the fence a little far away,

- So noisy.... The aftertaste of the magnificent battle between Moroha and Sir is ruined.

She complained to Haruka next to her.

- B-by the way, who does Shizuno think he's gazing at?

- Can Momochi-senpai stop this silly conversation please? Of course that one is me.

- An incredible self-confidence overflows from your tone of voice!

Defeated, Haruka hung her head,

- W-well. It's either you or Satsuki or Leshya, right?

- You don't get the joke, do you, Senpai? When it comes to Moroha, it's sure to say he's looking at all of us, right?

- Is, is that so...?

- Yes, of course. Moroha is cautious in the way he treats women. Since ancient times.

- A thorny way of saying...

- I wonder about it? But that's why he's so wonderful... is that probably what you're wondering, yes?

Being enigmatic, Shizuno said in a somewhat happy tone of voice.

Feeling like she would lose her estimation as a woman, or more precisely, her dignity, Haruka felt timid.

Whether she knew or not the feelings of others, Shizuno elegantly beckoned Moroha in the courtyard.

Then Moroha got in the building and disappeared.

Satsuki and Leshya were still quarreling.

The evening breeze came forth and Shizuno's breathtaking and beautiful hair fluttered.

She held it down as she turned towards Haruka.

- The □Donrou□ Moroha used a while ago showed it was useful to study under the old man the last three days.

- Yup. It was amazing. Since he can use Dark Arts too.

- Did Momochi-senpai also achieve that sort of result? You were practicing together, no? Satsuki was rejected and became sulky though.

- Because Tekka-san said "first come, first served", so it couldn't be helped.

As Haruka clarified,

- You can't call it a result, but thanks to the practice, I've decided.

She watched attentively the afterglow going down behind the far Hida Mountains.

A remarkably strong wind blew, not only the long hair of Shizuno fluttered, the short hair of Haruka fluttered too.

When it stopped, she told Shizuno.

- I volunteered for the rescue team.

Certainly it wasn't a decision made without consulting others, she had also obtained permission from Isurugi.

- And Moroha?

- Yes. He got Sir Edward's permission.

- Moroha is happy that Momochi-senpai has volunteered, right?

- I, I guess.

- I'm happy too, you know?

- ... Why?

When thinking about it, Shizuno expressly taking Haruka to the place where Moroha and Tekka were practicing felt like this was anticipated, or more precisely, planned.

- Ara? The difference between a person that can be trusted is next to Moroha or not when plunging into the jaws of death is significant, isn't it?

It's that easy, Shizuno replied.

Now that she said that, she somewhat understood the reason.

- I'm in charge of being Moroha's support. Since he can only take care of the front, covering his back is something I can do.

- Thank you very much.

- You don't need to thank me. I'm not doing it for y—

Haruka faltered there.

Her face seen from the side was rubbed by Shizuno's gaze.

She felt a silent pressure.

But Haruka mustered her courage and said.

- ... Because I also... like... Moroha.

She could only mumble in her mouth, but it was an incredible progress coming from her.

After the three days of training finished, Tekka explained.

- A person's courage cannot be tempered in a small period of time.

And.

- This time, you were able to take a step forward. Don't stop there. As long as you continue taking a step forward, courage can train anyone, anywhere. No matter how cowardly you are, depending on your mental attitude, you will someday get it without fail. Don't ever forget it, alright?

And.

With gentle eyes as if looking at his grandchildren.

As he smiled like a good-natured old man.

- Thank you very much.... It was really useful for me. ... But leaving Moroha aside, why did you go so far for a stranger like me?

Haruka made up her mind and gave asking a try.

Motivating herself with rough words was another step.

- At first, I thought you had gone too far to turn back. Seeing your eyes seeing Moroha, hearing your voice reaching Moroha, something struck home.

- Huh...?

- Your simple love is good. Your hidden love is even better. My karma gets cleaned just by looking at you by his side.

- Eh... eeeeeeeeeeh!?

- Don't be flustered. You don't pay attention to the things an unknown old geezer like me knows, do you?

The things said by Tekka calmed her.

(How sharp...)

She thought he resented her, but probably because her inner thoughts were in sight, she ended up being read,

- Well, I've been madly in love for 500 years.

She was laughed at.

- I have a mobile phone picture of Mati-chan from Dakar with whom I'm in a relationship now, would you like to see it?

- Your image of a Sennin is crumbling so stop it.

Despite interrupting the derailment and so on—

In order to avoid the karma gathering with the aftermath of the large-scale operation, Tekka, who announced that he would leave this area tonight, also gave his final advice.

- It's okay to take it slowly, but have the courage to keep moving forward. That is the same for love.

Haruka recalled Tekka's advice and carved it into her heart again.

Shizuno stared at her the whole time she indulged in meditation.

The doll-like face that didn't know what she was thinking about.

The eyes Shizuno turned to others were always horribly cold.

Like the freezing winter sky.

Haruka seemed to back off and to lose to the pressure, but she stood firm, not only that, she took a step forward.

The words just now were, so to speak, exactly like a declaration of war.

She and I proclaimed fair and square that we are rivals who came to like the same man.

I must not lose to the pressure.

Shizuno is scary though! She's a junior but she's scary!

(Do I do it? Oh? Oh? Me, in a scene of carnage?)

With energy only in her mind, her eyes became a little teary and stared back at her,

- If only there were no need to say such a thing.

The color of Shizuno's pupils subsided a bit.

Somehow, she had an even easier-to-approach atmosphere than usual.

A loss of interest, rather, she felt unwell.

As soon as Haruka faltered, feeling that,

- I, I mean, you asked me the other day, no? Besides, I've only revealed it to you, it's cowardly to keep it only to myself.

- What a nice person you are. It would have been better to follow Mayasan's example a little though?

- Why are you saying the name of that child?

- I think Momochi-senpai needs to be prepared to snatch him away from under her nose with a surprise attack?

- Ah, I, I can't do something like....

- What a pity. Even though Senpai is around three laps behind already.

- What kind of race are you talking about?

- Do you want to hear it?

- You don't have to say it.

- You're slow and can't do a surprise attack; you don't look like an expert of [Godlike Movement], how lame.

- Light Techniques have nothing to do with this, do they!?

- Well, please improve your speed as much as possible.

- You're that ahead!?

Haruka lowered her dejected shoulders.

Not being taken on had a limit. She, who had strained herself, felt stupid. She was working herself up even though there really wasn't anything to fight at.

- This time is a good opportunity, so please help Moroha properly and earn points.

- This indescribable feeling of being on top of your palm...

Haruka stared at her with scornful eyes, but Shizuno no longer took notice of that.

Moroha had just arrived on the rooftop and came walking, greeting them without delay.

And a glance was given at her.

Her eyes stirred her up, saying "Will you get a late start again?"

Fearless to the point of being impudent.

As her rival in love, what a formidable enemy she was.

(Tekka-san told me it was okay to be slow)

Haruka hit her own cheeks,

- You were amazing against Sir Edward!

She followed Shizuno and rushed to Moroha with Satsuki and Leshya.

Chapter 5: The Power

Early in the morning of the day the operation would be carried out. A total of 355 soldiers gathered in front of the main gate of the Shiojiri branch office.

As one would expect, making this quantity of "Saviors" gather in one place had a few words for it: a magnificent view.

The director-general Edward took the microphone and started talking to everyone.

"Let's be frank, this is going to be a tough fight"

An extremely short briefing. But that was enough.

By looking at the eyes of the ones who gathered, he could see the high morale they had.

There were already 10 buses waiting in line and each squad began to separate and board them.

- It's not like we have to split until we arrive there though.

- The operation seems to have already begun, so don't say selfish things.

Satsuki, who wanted to get on the same bus as Moroha, was being unreasonable, and Moroha remonstrated her.

- Momochi-senpai. Will you please take care of him?

- I-I know that. Stop pressuring me over and over again!

Shizuno kept a watchful eye on Haruka and Haruka became overwhelmed.

- I was deployed to the last force together with Principal-dono. Vexation consumes me, but I'll be praying for everyone's safety.

- Don't say that, even Leshya has an important mission to carry out.

Moroha encouraged the somewhat apologetic Leshya and everyone nodded.

The thing that happened yesterday.

The first secretary Takanashi Kyouko was found in a serious condition with massive hemoptysis.

Although she didn't lose her life, she was unconscious, meaning that in the state she was she wouldn't be able to return to the line for the time being.

Because there was no external wound and only her lungs were shredded with a blade-like object, Edward and the others presumed that it was an attempted assassination by means of some sort of "Ancestral Arts".

If that was the case, there was a high possibility that the mastermind controlling the "Metaphysicals" or someone under their patronage committed the crime.

Moroha and company had heard about it by chance during dinner.

- Why was that person targeted?

Taketsuru, who was nearby Moroha who cocked his head in puzzlement,

- Who knows? She's been doing **nothing but** sneaky conspiracies behind the scenes, so she paid for her sins, no?

He stated in a clear voice.

Anyhow—an alert status was immediately taken, and with that, some parts of today's operation were reviewed. It was decided that Mari, who was one of the key persons, would be more guarded.

For that, the person selected was "man-eater" Leshya because she was a Savior VS Savior expert and even served as the bodyguard of Lightning Empress.

It could be said that the right person was in the right place.

- Because Leshya will stay behind, we, the rescue team, can fight with no worries. I count on you, alright?

- Un-understood!

Leshya suddenly blushed and showed motivation.

Moroha nodded with a smile on his face.



Then, this time, he exchanged glances with Shizuno,
(You too. Please take care of all the *Strikers*)
(Of course, they were left to me, no?)

And intercommunicated their intention with their eyes.

While that tacit understanding and a strong sense of security tied him together with Shizuno, Moroha turned around to Satsuki.

- Do your best.

While he said so, he took his ID Tag from the breast pocket.

- Nii-sama, do your best too!

Satsuki also took out the ID Tag.

And they exchanged each other's ID Tags as if they were shaking hands.

Moroha grasped it tightly for a moment, confirmed the feeling and put it back in the breast pocket.

- Shall we go then? Momo-senpai.

He said his goodbyes, accompanied Haruka and got on the bus.

Five □Saviors□ were waiting inside.

Only five, but five elite people who excelled at covert operations.

He had already met them at the final meeting yesterday.

But one of them stood up and came to greet him again.

- I look forward to working with you today, captain. After all, I leave my life in your hands.

A black young man who let out bold words while showing a gentle smile on his face.

His name was Blaze. A high-ranking Knight who held the court rank of □Force = 2□and an A-Rank *Kuroma*.

Charles had lent his most trusted retainer.

Moroha, who had thought a *Shirogane* from the French Division would certainly be introduced, was surprised to see him.

- My □The Origin□is a technique that allows me to hide in the shadows. Getting that explained, he immediately understood why.

During the operation, it was decided that he would stand by in Moroha's shadow, and that was the meaning of □leaving my life in your hands□.

Although having him conceal himself in his own shadow felt weird, he controlled himself.

Even Shizuno, who fought with Blaze once, gave a subtle approval of him, saying □He's clever, calm and uses his head. He seems to be a person you can trust. As long as our interests coincide, that is□.

- Drop the captain please. You can call me Moroha.

- Understood. Since those are your words, then I shall call you Moroha-sama.

- Obeying me way too respectfully is difficult for me...

- Please get used to it. You are the only hero on the world who defeated PSG. For me, being impolite to you is like stomping the face of my master with my feet.

Although Blaze still had a gentle smile on his face, an intention saying he wasn't going to give up was felt.

Moroha gave up.

When he sat down next to Haruka, he heard a voice calling him from the back seat.

- Did you sleep well, you two? To tell the truth, your teacher couldn't sleep much.

The one who confessed, sounding embarrassed, was Moroha's class teacher Tanaka Tarou.

Recommended by Mari, he joined the rescue team.

For Moroha, having this teacher was reassuring; rather, he wanted to be replaced as the captain, but as usual, with the theory that the incredibly annoying ranks were this and that and so on, Tanaka, who was only a B-Rank, taking the command of them, would set a bad example.

- T-to be honest, I'm nervous, way too nervous...

Haruka said, seemingly awkward.

While whispering "Taking a step is incredibly difficult" and talking nonsense to herself.

- It's ok for both the Sensei and Senpai to sleep. I'll wake you up when we get there.

- Hahaha, I don't know which one of us is the teacher anymore.

- You're way too calm...

Tanaka smiled wryly and Haruka stared at him with scornful eyes.

- By being too calm don't you mean those over there?

Moroha scratched his head while looking at the other three people in the last seats.

They were all from the Japanese Division.

From the mid-twenties to the late thirties, their rough ages covered a wide range. However, all three of them stared at him with severe facial expressions, without wasting their breaths at all and wearing a heavy atmosphere.

He felt a strong enthusiasm for this operation from them.

He had heard that the three of them belonged to a small bureau called "Internal Audit Office" which was at the main office of the Japanese Division.

It seemed they were going to monitor and control the abuse of "Ancestral Arts" day and night.

Although it was called a "small bureau", it shouldn't be underestimated.

Currently, the number of "Saviors" that belonged to the Division was less than 500, so even if it was a small number of people, they had eyes enough to see each of their actions.

In fact, the three of them were powerful B-Ranks.

They made silence rise from their whole bodies, a drive showing signs of something similar to tenacity.

Probably affected by it, both Haruka and Tanaka held their tongues.

Moroha faced forward and waited for departure.
The *Stronghold* the four Fortress-class built was at the foot of Nokogiri Mountain—a steep region in the northern part of Akaishi Mountains. They would go by bus until the middle of the road then forcefully travel on foot with □Godlike Movement□.
Moroha viewed the Southern Alps, the destination he was aiming at through the windshield.
The landscape at the foot of the mountain, which should have been beautiful, was completely covered in morning mist.



At the foot of the northwestern direction of Nokogiri Mountain, there was a little open space called Arasawa.
It was the source of Kamanashi River branch, a land where forest and wetland mixed along the side of the running river and a place where people almost never entered.
Mountain climbers usually attacked from the opposite side, Kabubeezawa side, nobody would climb from Arasawa side unless they really liked it.
The Fortress “Labyrinth” was enshrined in such a desolated and forlorn place.
It mimicked a small hill-sized rocky mountain, blending into the surrounding landscape, so even if a curious climber passed by, they would only think it was part of it.
But □Saviors□ could distinguish it.
It was easy to spot when there was a large source of terrifying *satana* covering the whole area.
The □Saviors□ of the Japanese Division, who were lined up as if to cover the northern part of Arasawa surrounded by mountains in the east, south and west, waited for the signal of the assault while enduring the feeling of discomfort.
Katsuie Tabata, who commanded the forces, got in touch with other forces with a military transceiver.
□East side, ready for battle□
A report from Chloe of the French Division.

□West side is OK too□

A report from Edward.

□Raid team is fully prepared□

A report from Zlatan.

□Rescue team ready to go anytime□

Finally, a report from Moroha taking formation on the south side.

Tabata looked back at the soldiers under his command.

A large force of 200 people.

Morale was high, everyone had faces brimming with confidence.

This gave Tabata a certain feeling that they would surely win.

- Chaaaaaaaaaaaaarge!

He ordered in a loud voice.

Battle cries roared instantly.

The frontline troops composed of 64 people started the assault with Tabata at the lead, the *Kuroma* forces and reserve forces strengthened the rear.

The elite ones the Japanese Division was proud of were clad in *Prana* of various colors and ran, using □Godlike Movement□.

Their heels powerfully hit the ground, making very low frequency sounds.

They overlapped with the high-pitched tones of the battle cries, creating a battlefield symphony.

Tabata made an iron hammer manifest from the ID Tag and dashed to where *Labyrinth* was enshrined.

However, the goal wasn't the *Labyrinth*.

Not long after the start of the assault, a huge rumbling resounded.

A roaring sound enough to cover all voices and footsteps of dozens of people fully.

The ground shook. If it wasn't because they were *Shiroganes* who could use □Godlike Movement□, the earthquake would have made it difficult to stand.

An abnormal situation as if a cataclysm had occurred.

- Look!

Someone screamed.

Not noticing such a thing would be strange.

In front of Tabata, countless cracks ran on the ground over a wide area that seemed to be several hundred meters in diameter.

And seven giant things pushed up from the bottom of the ground.

Those were horns.

Their thickness and length differed, but the horns were at least 10 meters tall.

Tabata looked up at them while keeping balance on the ground that shook furiously.

Horribly, these huge horns were only a part of the **target**.

The body was still buried under the ground.

And that crawled out of the ground under the white sun with a large earthquake.

It appeared slowly, very slowly.

Without stopping. No matter how much time passed, seeing its full body was impossible.

Its huge body crawled out nonstop.

To the point of shouting "Enough already!"

How long was it going to take?

Finally, the demon completely showed up.

Sounds of gulping saliva were heard from everywhere.

He looked up at the monster with a length of several hundred meters and height of several tens of meters that seemed to cover the sky.

Tabata looked up so much his neck hurt.

It was an insect. If he had to deliberately compare it to something against his will, it would be a beetle with seven horns.

Fortress "Seven Horns".

A black haze-like line of *satana* extended from behind, making a connection with *Labyrinth*.

The fortification of a stronghold protection usually hidden underground that appeared and fought when the inner citadel was in a critical situation.

(So this is Fortress...? It's far more impressive than what I've heard)

Tabata trembled with excitement as he tightly grasped the iron hammer with both hands again.

Their task was to fight this monster until the rescue team completed the mission. If they did more damage and the Labyrinth had its hands full healing it, they could assist the rescue team travelling in the labyrinth on foot.

- Don't lose your nerve, breaking the formation! Charge, charge, charge!

Once the earthquake subsided, Tabata himself took the lead and restarted the assault.

Seeing that, the *Seven Horns* bent forward as if to meet him and attack him.

The fat, long and irregular seven horns, from which its name came from, began to emit a flash of light all of a sudden.

An electrical discharge phenomenon—countless electrical currents ran in the air between the horns, flying about.

Each one of them was like a snake and the seven horns were like nests.

According to a report from Charles who battled with it once, it fired cannon-like lightning bolts from them.

- You impudent!

Tabata stopped running straight, made big steps and advanced while turning his body to the left and right.

Without letting it narrow in. Because the electric shock could only advance fast in a straight line, it was easy to deal with when doing this.

—That was what he expected.

The electric discharge of the Seven Horns increased more and more.

Tabata saw.

A strange phenomenon occurred between the horns that were like a snake's nest due to the flying electric current.

Each of the fine electric current came to a stop in the air, curled up and carried a transformation that couldn't be achieved by natural phenomenon. Each and every one of them transformed into lightning butterflies as if emerging from a pupa.

- B-□Bugs□!*

*TN: Bugs is the furigana reading for "child".

- No, they're Evil Spirit species, aren't they!?

- □Bugs□of the Evil Spirit species!?

Screams rose from here and there.

A swarm of butterflies left the nest from the Seven Horns, flying down.

A slowness that didn't seem to be made of electric current. But there were too many.

That kind of thing came attacking with a large number that completely covered the sky, causing physiological aversion and terror.

- Don't panic. Engage the enemy!

Tabata immediately assessed the situation and gave a command in a loud voice.

The charge was cancelled. Everyone paused, aimed at the swarm of butterflies and released □Jupiter□.

If they hadn't done that, they would have died. They were too many, evading them one by one or slipping through them was impossible.

- Oooora.

Tanaka swung the iron hammer, put *prana* of destruction on the wind that arose and set it free.

The affected butterflies disappeared one after another.

But there were some of them that flew without concern, around 10% of them.

A troublesome aspect of the Evil Spirit species that Light Techniques had trouble dealing with.

Some of the uncrushable butterflies reached Tabata, swarming him and bursting open while making violent electric explosions.

- Guuuu...

Although Tabata survived with □Magic Resistance□, burns were created all around his body.

Screams were given from those who were struck by the butterflies all around the battlefield.

- Calm down! Calm down somehow or other!

Tabata shouted in anger but it had no effect at all.

Everyone had their hands full escaping from the butterflies in front of them that they couldn't afford to listen to Tabata's instructions.

Shrieks and screams dominated the field.

- If Suruga-sama were here, this would be...!

Grieves of despair echoed everywhere.

(Now, even if there are complaints, it will probably start...)

The chain of command collapsed completely and the Seven Horns itself came attacking there.

It just walked forward. Every time the giant feet stepped on the battlefield, his companions were sent flying.

Tabata was an excellent commander, therefore, he immediately realized.

The inevitable destruction—

Cold sweat flowed down Tabata's spine.

And he decided when it flowed down.

– Everyone, retreeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeat!

A big order carrying even *prana*.

The primitive scream, which couldn't be called a Light Technique, ran over a wide area, shaking the atmosphere.

The panicked companions grimaced and came back to their senses as if cold water was poured on them.

With the sharp and loud rebuke of Tabata reverberating in the whole area, a tiny bit of control was restored.

They supported each other and started an escape while driving the swarm of butterflies away.

Though being the worst of the worst, they were able to escape. Tabata felt relieved.

At this point, it was the very best to not die in vain. It ended up happening so.

– The rear unit will fill the position of all A-Ranks! Group together!

To the continuous instructions, Wadatsumi Kaya hastened to reach Tabata's location.

It was a mission that required steel determination, but as one would expect, nobody was hesitant.

But, as if to laugh at that resolution, the *Seven Horns* took an unbelievable action.

It suddenly stopped moving forward, turned around calmly and left the battlefield without going after them as if not being interested in small fries....

As they stared at its huge rear part that was leaving, Tabata and the others trembled in humiliation.

At the same time, they grinded their teeth at their own worthlessness.

It hadn't been long since the battle started.

They weren't able to keep the front for even a small moment and couldn't even deliver a mere hit.

– We'll run after it...

Tabata said as if groaning in a subdued voice.

– Run after it? Only the five of us?

– Shouldn't it be better to call the subordinates back and put the organization back on its feet aga—

– That will take too long!

Kaya said flatly and the rest who acknowledged that reason closed their mouths.

- There's no other way.... If we leave that thing as is, it'll become a great problem.

What if, for example, the British Headquarters Force, which was in a battle with *Statue*, was attacked from behind?

Except for Edward, they would end up annihilated.

If they suffered a pincer attack, they wouldn't be able to escape.

- The situation will flow depending on all of *Seven Horns'* movements.

That's why we're not going to take our eyes off it.

Tabata started running alone again.

Fortunately, the brave companions followed him silently.

It was something impossible for them to have another force fall into hell because of their own mistakes.



A single *Strikers* squad defended the front line of the Stronghold class.

Moreover, Moroha, Haruka and Kamekichi were absent.

Challenging the next to impossible—however, no one was being hesitant.

Because it was engraved in everyone's hearts.

The memory of that summer when they fought against a Stronghold class for the first time under hopeless circumstances.

The experience they acquired in exchange for the hellish mortal combat told them.

"We can do it if we defend the front line"

Even though a huge monster crawled out of the bottom of the earth, no one became agitated.

They gallantly stared at it with a fixed gaze.

Its shape, if forced to compare it to something, resembled a sea anemone.

The tentacles were innumerable and their tips were all female faces. It was possible to call them "heads".

They wriggled sinuously and mysteriously and laughed ominously and mockingly.

The Fortress "Sea Anemone".

Charging at the front of 8 *Shirogane*, captain Isurugi gave an order.

– Sophia, to the right! Ranjou, to the left! Go!

□□Roger!□□

Sophia and Satsuki came to the front and ran to the left and right of Isurugi, making a line.

They were exactly 5 meters apart. The fruits of daily training.

A basic formation of three people, nicknamed “Trident” by the White Knight Organization.

(The right, huh. Why is it Ranjou from the beginning!?)

While running behind the three of them, Taketsuru exulted in his heart.

The remaining five people, including Taketsuru, were the rear guard. At the beginning of hostilities where the strength of the enemy and the attack method they had were unknown, a part of them would deal with it at once. Supposing they were wiped out by a ranged attack, it would be the end for them.

Similarly, Isurugi, Sophia and Satsuki, who would hit this virtual unknown enemy first, had an important responsibility.

Until now, Isurugi, Moroha and Sophia formed a trident. Even if Moroha wasn't there, someone like Manako or Nosada would do it well.

To think Satsuki would be a great selection.

(She sure is enthusiastic, huh)

While seeing their retreating figures full of excitement, Taketsuru talked to himself in his chest.

On the other hand, seeing Satsuki and company charging at it, the Sea Anemone also moved.

Like a surge, it stretched its countless heads.

The distance between the opponents was shortened instantly, plunging into a *cross range*.*

*TN: Cross range is the furigana reading for battle range.

The human faces at the tip of the tentacles bared their fangs and discharged a rotten juice-looking venom.

Isurugi readied his wide-edged sword, Sophia readied her hardened glass shield and Satsuki readied her small sword.

– Oooh!

– Full power, full throttle!

– Taaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!

□Jupiter□released by the three of them at the same time.

The similar but different brilliance of each *prana*—the flashes of light of Isurugi's lightning yellow, Sophia's bright yellow and Satsuki's pure gold exploded.

A dazzling storm exercised its power.

The numberless heads that descended on them like an eerie surge were smashed to atoms, disappearing.

The three who opened hostilities successfully stepped firmly on the ground and took up positions right there.

The *Sea Anemone* was huge. Probably the number of tentacles didn't drop. The next heads flooded like a high wave right away, engaging the three of them.

– Moroha's teachings—clear your mind, instead of looking at one thing, look at the whole picture, feel it, endure the bad feelings and hit! And strike! And beat!

Sophia used both ends of the surfboard-shaped shield held by both hands like a blunt weapon and struck each and every tentacle with human face coming to attack.

The blows unleashed from a pompous and dignified form made them burst like balloons.

– Y-you don't need to tell me! Just when I was trying to not be aware of it! Satsuki screamed as she swung her sword, driving the tentacles away. Thanks to this, her form was so chaotic that it looked like a child's sword play.

– Sophie-senpai, you stupid!

– I can't hear you because my mind is clear!

The two girls were noisy even at times like this. However, their performance was furiously vigorous.

They splendidly tried to hold their ground there.

Since they were taking care of the left and right sides, Isurugi could concentrate only on the front—on attacking and nothing else.

– Ooooh!

He put himself in a hassou stance and swung down the sword together with a roar.

Isurugi was bursting with energy today, *prana* ran well on his sword blade.

With each stroke of the sword, five or six tentacles with human faces vanished all at once.

A shrieking sound.

The Stronghold class made full use of its own resources, but no matter how long it extended its tentacles, they would never come near them.

They were cleared away with the strong sword of □Venus□, mowed down with a storm of □Jupiter□ and reduced to ashes with the swordflash of □Mars□.

The overwhelming attack power also became an invincible defense.

This was the effectiveness of *Trident*.

A formation that made use of the power of the Aces who excelled at attacking by 150%.

Not only that, since the today's Aces were in perfect form, even a Stronghold class could be stopped.

If the three of them weren't completely able to hold their ground, then at that moment, and following the standard practice, Taketsuru and the others would have to come in and increase the number of the vanguard to four or five people, but there were no signs of such instruction coming from Isurugi.

However, the rear guard had no time for that.

They released □Jupiter□as required, covering them,

- Come, Souya! Take turns with Ranjou!

As soon as there was an order from Isurugi, the left and right vanguard were replaced.

The called Manako stood next to Satsuki, took the place she was in charge of and fought.

- T-thank you very much!

- It is my duty after all.

Manako replied coolly while cutting off a tentacle with human face.

Satsuki, who came back tottering, had all her body cover in venom and injuries like she was burned.

- Don't be impatient, go get healed.

- Y-yes.

Taketsuru winked and Satsuki headed staggeringly towards Shizuno and the rest of the *Kuromas* waiting for her.

Using every little bit of the □Saviors□wasn't allowed.

Allowing so wasn't the standard practice of the White Knight Organization.

Healing by means of Dark Arts took a bit of time, but if the three vanguards rotated with the four rear guards, then they could gain time. When Sophia and Manako got injured, Taketsuru and Nosada replaced them, and when Taketsuru also got injured, the brimming-with-vigor Satsuki came back. Of course, even though Isurugi was at the front line, he could grasp the situation of his companions perfectly and could issue instructions for substitution before it became dangerous.

Despite all that, if he got a little injured, it didn't mean that he had to be substituted immediately, he would pull back at the last moment. Otherwise, a rotation couldn't be maintained. His grasp of the battle situation was superb.

While Isurugi swung the sword more ferocious than anyone else, his head constantly analyzed his and his opponent's battle strength.

His field of vision was terribly wide, as if all 360 degrees were caught by his eyes.

He wasn't just only blessed with military prowess, he also possessed high tactical commanding abilities.

Back then at the summer camp, Moroha tried the stunt of stopping the advancement of the Stronghold class by himself, but in the case of Isurugi, if he had companions that cooperated with him, it would be like this.

This was the reason why the White Knight Organization put emphasis on formation and teamwork and thoroughly enforced it at the training agencies.

Isurugi Jin was, so to speak, the ideal, the heaven-sent child of that standard practice.

The so-called *formula machine* created by Akane Academy.*

*TN: Formula machine is the furigana reading for masterpiece.

Since he became the captain, *Strikers* not only got the best war results in Japan, they also got nobody killed in action, so it wasn't like there was no reason for it.

(Well, I'd say that more than that kind of thing, you want the strength of an individual like Moroha)

From Taketsuru's point of view, it was something extravagant to be worried about.

(You see, if you hadn't used it, I would have dropped out of this team long ago)

Isurugi, who burned to nothing the tentacles with the swordflashes released together with slashing attacks, gave instructions without taking a break and let Sophia and Nosada be replaced.

Their retreating figures made him vividly remember the leaders and brave generals who made their names on the ancient battlefield.

Seeing that, Taketsuru deeply respected him from the bottom of his heart.

- Taketsuru, you're up! Replace Souya!

- Okey-dokey!

They could only be on this team until graduation.

While tasting the delight of fighting to the side of Isurugi, Taketsuru rushed to the front line.

When Isurugi, Sophia and Manako were still fighting on the front line—

Satsuki, who retreated to a safe zone,

- I still lack tons of experience!

She made the shape of □ on the ground and regretted in a loud voice.

- Ara? Only experience is what you're lacking?

Being ridiculed by Shizuno who was treating her, Satsuki became angry.

- Don't talk nonsense, and be quiet. You're getting in the way of □Hearing□.

Similarly, she got scolded by Tokiko and became angrier.

She wanted to flap both hands and feet like a child, but if she did that, the healing process would actually take more time and her return to the front line would be delayed; she was her own weight.

As she made a sullen look,

- I have... I have to stand there longer than Sophie-senpai at least.

- Why are you obsessive about strange things?

- ... Because. If Moroha were here, then Isurugi-senpai would be on the right and who would be on the left? When that moment comes, I want to stand next to Moroha! I want to support him!

- I told you not to raise your voice! Be quiet!

- Oouch.

Receiving a slap on the face from Tokiko, Satsuki now had tears in her eyes, without saying anything.

Shizuno crawled her fingers on her reddened cheek and said while spelling healing magic characters.

- Then you have to heal quickly and return to get experience, no?

Although her words were in the form of a joke, her tone of voice was kind. If she didn't make fun of her as usual, Satsuki wouldn't feel well.

- Uh.

She groaned.

- Y-you don't have to agree to do something like this. Don't you want to achieve more and fire offensive Dark Arts one after another?

Strikers had *Kuromas* such as the third-year student Doujima and the second-year student Takenaka, both of them standing by as the ones in charge of healing. It seemed that giving fire support was better for Shizuno whose forte was Dark Arts of ice.

- I have been asked by Moroha to take care of everyone.

Shizuno said so, held her tongue and devoted herself to treat her.

- What!? Haimura is going to mess me up!? That's cunning! And unfair!*

*TN: What Moroha does to her is 〇〇〇〇〇〇, I deduce from the way Tokiko speaks, which is always dirty, that is something along those lines, but I can be wrong. There's no hint as to why it can be except for "something indecent" as I found on the web.

Tokiko began to shout, but they ignored her with great concentration.

Satsuki stared at Shizuno nursing her cordially.

-

She was more gallant and neat and tidy than usual.

It was strange because she looked like a shining halo somehow. When in reality she was a woman with a wicked tongue!

(Tsk)

She thought Moroha was cruel because this witch ended up transforming into a nightingale just by having asked a few words.

(If only he could make that with me and me only)

She knew it wasn't the case for that, but the flame of jealousy flared up.

- I insist, you have to go and give fire support. That's appropriate for a witch.

- I don't know why you got so angry, but...

Shizuno sighed in lamentation,

- The moment I do so, I'm sure I'll be told to go back, no?

She slowly turned around.

Being lured by her, Satsuki followed her gaze.

Far behind the battlefield. Far, far behind.

A distance of 100 meters and a little.

A number of mysterious people were there.

Everyone wore goat skull masks and was wrapped in black robes, an ominous outfit.

There were men and women. Their statures were of all ranges.

The Les Éléments of [Cradle of the Sun].

44 Cathedral knights, masters of Dark Arts.

Stamping their feet, they were about to reach the battlefield at last.

There was a reason why the arrival of "Les Éléments" was a little late. When Chloe notified them that their preparations were ready through radio, they were deployed far behind compared to now.

From there, they watched the war situation while moving forward and slowly advanced until they got where they had to be.

What were they so careful about?

That was, of course, to see how much *Strikers* defended the front line.

If the barrier was unstable, moving forward would be too dangerous for the "Dark Saviors" Chloe and company.

If the *Strikers* were able to hold out in one place, it would allow them to get closer to the "Metaphysical".

The shorter the distance, the stronger the power of the Dark Arts when impacting.

- I think 100 meters will do, no?

- I am sorrrrryyy, but I object. I think 90 meters is fiiiine.

- As expected of the people of Akane Academy.

They discussed as they came walking.

No matter how superior the vanguard "Light Saviors" were, if there was no fire support from the Dark Saviors, the treatment of the ones that gradually got injured wouldn't be enough against the fierce attacks of the "Metaphysical" and their rotation would collapse.

However, in the unlikely event that they misread the distance, came too close and were attacked by the "Metaphysical", the Dark Arts corps would crumble and both would fall together. They couldn't compromise on that consideration.

- Neither boss Zlatan nor Blaise-chan are here, so we can't make a decision.

- I am sorry for being unreliaaaable. I am really bad at taking leadership.

- About that, the Vice Division Head can determine it. Correct?

Chloe winked at Flavie who was next to her.

Her companions probably didn't see her through the mask.

- I have been away from battle for a long time, haven't I?

- Your intuition shouldn't have become that dull though.

- You are saying something unreasonable...

Flavie was stunned, but because she was on the battlefield, she didn't further grumble about it.

She stood straight and started to walk with lively steps.

She was trying to be hidden in the procession, but she took the lead.

The sense of inferiority based on her five-year absence disappeared.

The return of the Vice Division Head.

The return of the leader of the Knights who commanded sly old dogs in place of Charles who did as he pleased like a cat.

Chloe and the others looked at each other's face and followed her with great joy.

Flavie gently raised her hand.

At the signal of "Stop the march", the magicians stopped without disrupting the line.

They were about 80 meters away from *Sea Anemone*.

It was Flavie's decision to stand and fight here.

- The target is huge, so aiming at it will not be a problem. All members, shoot at it with your maximum *mana*.

She was rough at first,

- These five years, show it to me.

Then kindly gave an order.

Instead of replying, Chloe and company started spelling as if contesting their own abilities.

And a splendor of magic bloomed in profusion.

From the 3rd Rank to the 6th Rank.

A great variety of Dark Arts, such as simple and unmatched shock waves, bright red flames, gushing spears, slashing gusts, blizzards, thunder, voids—forces of destruction and ruin were fired, growing wild and exercising power.

They violently exploded on the body surface of *Sea Anemone*, detonating like a chain, showering it with blows.

Like a simultaneous volley.

It shaved off about 20% of the giant that was over 100 meters long.

A roar burst, it was so loud it could be heard even by the *Strikers* on the front line.

This dreadfulness, this firepower that matched the number of the high-ranking Dark Savors.

Matching the former Russia, the true strength of France was feared even now.*

*TN: Russia is the furigana reading for "the worst and most sinister" and France is the furigana reading for "Cradle of the Sun".

As soon as they arrived at the battlefield, they showed off their strong presence with a single blow, but nobody was full of pride.

With each person carrying out an effect measurement very uninterestedly, they assessed the firepower.

The *Sea Anemone* had lost a lot of volume, but it performed physical regeneration in a "quite natural-looking" state.

Despite they shaved off about 20% of it, it was restored to its original state.

The *Labyrinth* sent *satana* and healed it.

Even though they saw that absurdity, without becoming confused or losing their cool, "Les Éléments",

- The regeneration speed is higher than Sea Monster species'.

- Kahahah. I thought "if it's our firepower, then we can surprisingly kill it".

- I became over-excited, I am sorryyyyy.

- Isn't it interesting if you consider this as a firepower test?

They chatted like they were on a picnic.

Nobody was agitated even when knowing that it was a genuine immortal Stronghold class.

Naturally.

If they had lost their composure and got the cold feet with something like this, they would have been expelled long ago.

By their genius master, the 11th Saint-Germain.

- You fools! How long do you plan to play? If you have the time to chirp, then burn it! Hit it! Cut it! Make an oversized flower path for the Seventh Person who crawls through the labyrinth.

Their master, who came flying from the heavens, scolded Chloe and the others as he glared at them.

The scolding of the extremely severe Charles.

From an elevated place where no tentacles would reach him even though it was a Stronghold class, he sent heavy bomb-like flames and snowstorms.

Without bearing it, the *Sea Anemone* writhed in agony.

- Kahahah. Charles-sama is straightforward and nice, isn't he?

- At least say it impatiently.

- I think both are speaking ill of hiiim. I am sorry for retortiiiiing.

Chloe and the others had a lighthearted talk.

What kind of Dark Arts should be summoned next—?

As everyone thought so openly with a smile on their faces.

Chapter 6: The Speed

The starting position of Moroha and the rest of the rescue team was at the foot of Nokogiri Mountain.

Only those whose specialty was □Godlike Movement□.

A form to easily travel on the steep mountain, go round, cut in from the south and take *Labyrinth* overhead.

The □Metaphysical□ camouflaged as a rocky mountain.

Tekka told them “You can get inside its body from the countless holes of all sizes at the entrance of the cave.”

– Alright, shall we go?

Watching the fight that started with the Stronghold class at three places in Arasawa, Moroha called out to his companions.

Then entrusted Blaise with the transceiver. Once they get inside the belly of the *Labyrinth*, the radio waves weren’t going to pass through. It would be useless.

Blaise, who received it politely, sunk into Moroha’s shadow while bowing. Seeing his figure completely disappear into the shadow, Moroha jumped down.

He went down the declivitous-looking steep slope as if he were sliding, using the sole of his shoes.

Haruka, Tanaka and the three people of the Internal Audit Office followed him without delay.

The three Guardian Stronghold class were attracted by the diversion forces, so they could get inside without trouble.

From this point, things depended on Moroha and company.

The entrance had the appearance of a cavern, but soon it turned into an eerie scenery.

The floor, walls and ceiling were made of rotting flesh.

When they raised their eyes, visible arteries ran everywhere. They were light sources that emitted an obscure glow and flickered with irregular pulsations.

Although lights weren’t a problem, the visibility was dim, stimulating an uneasy feeling.

Getting into the interior of a living creature made them understand with disgust rather than with their heads.*

*TN: I don't get the meaning of the last part and couldn't find an explanation for it, so I went full literal there.

- Ugh.... It's more disgusting than I thought....

Haruka grumbled. She stepped on it to ascertain the feeling at her feet.

Moroha and Tanaka followed suit.

- It feels restless, don't you agree...?

It wasn't to the point of hindering their actions or make □Godlike Movement□ grow dull.

They weren't used to that stepping feeling.

- Although it's as the old man says, this is just...

It seemed that the adult Tanaka, who wasn't that much perturbed by things, was a bit defeated.

- Let's hurry.

One of the Internal Audit Office suggested and Moroha agreed.

He took the lead and went further inside.

At the end of the gentle downhill, the flesh passage branched off into two but—

- This way.

Moroha pointed to the right passage without hesitation.

This was also Tekka's testimonial, he had said that the central part of the *Labyrinth* was where the people who got their souls pulled out were imprisoned.

How did he get that? That was the densest place with *satana*.

Now, the inside of *Labyrinth* was full of *satana*, even near the entrance.

They couldn't feel whether it was dark or light. When they normally could.

However, Moroha strained his eyes and made a distinction.

It was easy to detect the characteristics of the opponent from the color of the *prana*.

Unlike *prana*, *mana* was poor in color so it wasn't very clear.

And telling *satana* apart was even more difficult.

Still, Moroha focused his attention and distinguished the thin shades of color.

The *satana* filling the right passage was slightly darker, and with that, he decided it was the way that led to the central part.

In that way, Moroha took the lead, selecting a number of forks, with that, the rescue team progressed deeper and deeper.

The roads he wanted to go were very rarely blocked, and when that happened, he was forced to make a detour, but there were no big problems.

The structure of the maze was stable. It was a proof that the diversion forces were making great efforts and that *Labyrinth* was spending all its time and energy on recovery.

Moroha and the others used □Rentei□ to isolate sounds of footsteps and their presence.

It was highly likely that the Archfiend “Shade” was lurking somewhere in this maze.

If possible, they wanted to reach the captured ones without being detected. Running and using □Rentei□ at the same time was impossible, quick steps were the most they could do, but there was no choice.

The headless Evil Spirit class with which he fought the other day was terribly tough.

Encountering such a thing was a great waste of time.

Until now everything had gone well, but—

– Haimura-kun.

Suddenly having his name called from behind, Moroha got startled.

Turning around with Haruka and Tanaka, he made the gesture of □Shh□ by putting the index finger on his lips.

The one who called Moroha was one of the people of the Internal Audit Office—their name, if he remembered correctly—was Suzuhara.

– I’d like you to hear an extremely personal request.

Suzuhara ignored that gesture and continued talking.

They stopped using □Rentei□ and the sticky sounds of stepping on the flesh resounded gloomily.

– Why at a time like this?

Moroha didn’t stop walking and asked in a low voice.

– I couldn’t begin to talk until I waited for a moment like this. Otherwise I would have been removed from the rescue team.

Suzuhara confessed in a depressing voice and her two companions nodded.

– Have you ever wondered whose soul is the core of “Shade”?

–

Moroha held his tongue.

It didn’t mean he didn’t consider it himself, but he listened to what Edward, Charles, Tekka and the others discussed next to him.

The headless Evil Spirit class was a □Metaphysical□ whose core was created from Flavie’s soul.

Furthermore, not only the Evil Spirit class was confirmed, *Shade* was confirmed too.

From that, two speculations were born.

The first was: when using the soul of a □Savior□ as the core, they became Evil Spirit class?

The second was: were the □Saviors□ kidnapped by “Invisible” turned into Evil Spirit class?

Based on those speculations, whose soul was the core of *Shade* then? The answer could be narrowed down from 10 kidnapped people.

They were all talented □Saviors□ of the leader class.

When seeing the □fighting strength□ status, Flavie was the weakest of the ten, and because of that, a powerful headless □Metaphysical□ was born.

“My head hurts when thinking about the rest”—Edward complained.

“Blue Knight” Boris Terry from the British Division.

“Phoenix” Graham Gerrard also from the British Division.

“Flash Sword” Leonard Van Percy from the American Division.

And “Wolf Girl” Melaine Flamini also from the American Division.

And Kashiwaba Gen’ichi, the former Internal Audit Office Head of the Japanese Division.

These five people were esteemed as the most powerful “Saviors”, expressly among A-Ranks, so the Evil Spirits that had their souls as their cores would be surely troublesome.

As a result of the discussion, Edward put his hand on his forehead and stated:

“This is quite the worst-ish scenario. What *Shade* is using as its core seems to be Gen’ichi Kashiwaba’s soul...”

The Evil Spirit class scattered what seemed to be human intention around. That became a big hint.

Moroha could only hear a mere shrill voice, but Tekka seemed to have heard nuances of Japanese language from *Shade*. A skill that was unique to a multilingual who had mastered dozens of languages in order to live 500 years and to express his love to women around the world.

In the past, there were four “Saviors” from the Japanese Division who were kidnapped by “Invisible”.

Among them, the person who seemed to have a strong feeling of “wanting to hear” was no other than Kashiwaba Gen’ichi.

– Office Head Kashiwaba is the victim of “Invisible”. Possibly he made up his mind.

The fact was that Suzuhara and the others also gathered information on their own.

During that, she got the opportunity to talk to Tekka and seemed to have learned the same story Moroha had heard.

– I... we want to save the office head. Will he be freed? If we defeat *Shade*?

– ... If the result is the same as what happened to Flavie-san, then yes.

There was no absolute guarantee, so Moroha replied prudently.

– If so!

Suzuhara said loudly.

Her enthusiasm was transmitted. In other words, she wanted to be purposely found by *Shade* and fight.

Was this the reason for her pre-departure tension?

– Is he a good boss?

In response to Haruka’s simple question, Suzuhara shook her face with a bitter look.

– Honestly, he’s a detestable boss. He was someone who wouldn’t be satisfied unless seeing what is inside other people’s wallets and how they would spend their holidays.

Although it was mixed with bitterness and sadness,

– Still... he was by no means a person who had to become a monster and have his dignity as a human trampled underfoot.

She made her clasped fist quiver.

Moroha gave a glance at that and scratched his head.

(The subordinates are better people than their boss, huh...)

However, he was compelled to say he was an inconsiderate credulous person. He was sorry.

(If possible, I wish you had said this before departure...)

He understood the feelings of Suzuhara and the others. However, the highest priority should be to carry out the operation as quickly as possible and to rescue the ones who were caught.

If she had said this first, they could have discussed the subjugation of *Shade* freely afterwards.

– Please, Haimura-kun! When I heard that you are an S-Rank who actually defeated an Evil Spirit class once and became the captain of the rescue team, I thought there was no choice!

(I give up...)

Because of Suzuhara's words, he could see that her foundational thought that said "Since you're an S-Rank, you can do something about it" was all visible.

There were no evil intentions. But that was just a mental block.

He understood well why a good adult like Suzuhara took an unthinkable action like this.

If Moroha weren't there, Suzuhara and the others would have been cautious too, and if that was the case, they wouldn't have lost sight of what they understood with a little thought like "carrying out the operation is more important", and this extremely helpless conversation wouldn't exist.

Moroha was depressed inside.

He could take it easy because he realized it was already too late.

Something was in sight of Moroha's eyes.

The *satana* that filled his path suddenly became dense.

Not because they were getting close to the central part.

Someone with an absurd dense *satana* was approaching.

—I heard you.

Together with a telepathic-like thought, a shrill voice that felt like it ruptured their eardrums echoed, and Moroha grimaced.

Be that as it may, the appearance of the owner of the voice wasn't captured by the eye. Haruka turned her eyes all around, looking confused.

—Let me hear more. Let me hear to my heart's content.

The shrill voice pierced their ears one more time.

But again, neither its shadow nor shape couldn't be seen.

No. There was a shadow.
There were shadows everywhere in the dim maze of flesh.

—Disclose all, everything about *youuuuuuuu*!

Moroha, Haruka and Tanaka.
Suzuhara and the other two.

During that time, something jumped out of the shadow cast on the ground as if hitting a wedge.

Similar to a person but it wasn't a person.

If compared to something, it was an incarnated silhouette.

Its body all jet black. Without facial features.

It was *Shade*.

It spread both arms as if to show off its own strength.

Large and sharp claws were all lumped and lined up at the spread fingertips.

Shade rotated its body and attacked Tanaka in front with its right arm and Suzuhara in the back with its left arm.

It appeared from an unexpected place and even attacked, an instant and perfect surprise attack.

– Ahyaah.

Despite Tanaka letting out a funny scream, he jumped backwards with a surprisingly brilliant defensive body movement.

– Guaaaaah.

Suzuhara got the top of her shoulder to the side of her torso slashed by the claws.

Even though she fell and was supported by her teammates, her eyes directly stared at Moroha.

Even in a situation like this, her eyes sincerely said □I leave it to you□.

(How troublesome...)

Seeing Suzuhara, who lost consciousness, Moroha clicked his tongue in his mind. An instant when he could sympathize with Edward's loneliness.

But Moroha reached for his breast pocket,

(Come, Saratiga...)

He unsheathed the ID Tag and put all his *prana* into it.

A flash of light exploded in his palm.

When he traced the engraved name of Satsuki with his thumb, the metal plate expanded and changed its shape.

A sword materialized.

A long sword with a beautiful mirror-like blade.

A completely polished treasured sword.

A genuine holy sword that wasn't a tiny bit different from his memories.

Moroha held his partner aloft,

– Suraaaa.

He attacked, putting white light *prana* in the long sword swing.

□Jupiter□ hit the side of *Shade's* face that was about to go after Suzuhara. □Metaphysicals□ were generally tough. Something like this couldn't inflict much damage.

But the Evil Spirit class was lightweight. The instant shock stopped its movement. It interfered with the pursuit.

- Fall back.

In that instant, Moroha came close to *Shade*.

The glistening sword blade with *prana* drew a bright white trail in the air and ran, aiming at its shoulder.

Just before—it was bisected into two, *Shade* dived at high speed into the shadow cast on the ground.

It dodged it.

- Behind you, Moroha!

Then Haruka's warning flew.

Moroha turned the trajectory of the sword backwards right away and connected it.

Shade emerged from the shadow of the ground as if to take his back.

A pincer attack from the front and back with Haruka.

A combination that wasn't discussed in advance and with which Haruka worked well with Moroha.

Shade, who had tried a back attack, dived into the shadow on the ground as if giving up.

- I won't let you get away.

Moroha roared and swung his sword, but it escaped, the point of the sword just grazed it a bit.

It dodged the pincer attack. *Shade* getting behind them could happen again.

Being prepared was essential.

After making eye contact with Haruka, they both jumped back at the same time.

Moroha put his back on the wall and tried to take a short pause.

However, from the shadow cast on the wall, the Evil Spirit revealed only its upper body and waved its claws from overhead.

- This bastard.

- Watch out!

Moroha brought his waist down just in time, evading it, then Tanaka threw a knife at it, protecting him.

The knife pierced *Shade's* right hand.

When *Shade* disappeared into the shadows again, the knife fell to the ground as if being left behind.

(This is difficult)

Moroha stepped slowly, gaining distance.

This monster appeared in unexpected places and at unexpected moments.

If he stayed in one place, it would come from behind.

(Where is it? What is it going to do next?)

He searched with his eyes while jumping back.

(No... this way of thinking won't do)

He was already one step behind.

Instead of doing so, he would seize the initiative.

Shade appeared, striking Tanaka's back and Tanaka rolled at the last moment, avoiding it.

- Blaise-san.

It was safe to come out now. Grasping the progress of the battle, Moroha shouted.

- Did you call me?

Immediately after, Blaise showed up as if emerging from Moroha's shadow.

Because having time to talk about his thoughts was irritating, Moroha put a line of magic characters into written form.

Blaise, who read that phrase, said "Understood" in astonishment. Roger that.

Shade, who had failed to deliver a surprise attack to Tanaka, disappeared into the shadows again,

- I command Let there be light!

Moroha hit the magic characters written in the air with his left hand.

Ancestral Arts Dark Arts "Flash".

A blinding and intense light exploded.

It filled the ceiling, walls, ground and passage fully with an ardent light.

The shadows, which had spread faintly throughout the passage, were destroyed exhaustively.

—I just want to know all the secrets of this world!

The flash emitted by Moroha was for an instant.

However, *Shade* had completely lost its hiding spots despite being for an instant, and without bearing it, it showed up.

Moroha followed its movements with scrutinizing eyes and assaulted it with the sword.

Shade waved its claws to meet his attack—but it was too late.

The raised right hand. It went straight down, taking the fastest and shortest route.

A slash.

Moroha cut off the right arm that *Shade* waved.

—I can't hear, I can't hear, I can't hear, I can't hear anything due to this paaaaaaain

Shade escaped as it suffered in agony.

Moroha began a pursuit, but the passage had already returned to its original darkness, it had succeed in taking refuge in the darkness.

It was there —

- In other words, my role is to be the beater on a hunt, is it not?

Without a moment's delay, Blaise's "Flash" happened!

The light drove the shadows away again, and Shade appeared suddenly as if it had been shooed away.

– We'll guard Blaise-dono!

The two people who were guarding the fainted Suzuhara escorted Blaise together.

Without having to worry about him, Moroha could slash at *Shade*.

– Signal with your eyes at least!

Haruka slashed at *Shade* with Moroha as she glared at him.

Tanaka also followed them with knives in both hands.

The two, who were unable to react after the first "Flash", demonstrated they could deal with it the second time.

Shade was surrounded by three people and attacked from three sides.

Tanaka's knives pierced its head, Haruka's small sword slashed its shoulder and Moroha's long sword bisected its torso.

Or so they thought.

(I feel no response in my hands?)

Moroha gazed at it in wonderment.

Shade, who should have been hewn from three sides, disappeared as a haze. He understood.

What Moroha and the others had slashed was its afterimage.

With this, it resembled "Komon", the way of walking *Shiroganes* used.

The "Metaphysical" controlled Light Techniques?

Shivers—shivers ran on Moroha's spine.

At the same time, the inside of his nose became irritably dubious.

An enormous amount of *satana* was imaging behind Haruka together with bloodlust.

Shade, who had made an afterimage and slipped through the siege, raised the left claw overhead and back-attacked Haruka who couldn't understand the situation yet.

(I'm sorry)

Moroha didn't hesitate and kicked Haruka flying.

Thanks to that, the kicking foot became her substitute.

He had no choice but to clench his teeth and concentrate "High Durability" on his right leg.

The five claws tore his shin and gouged five scars.

Although the wound was superficial, it was a vital part of the body. A sharp pain tormented him.

– Mo-Moroha!

– I'm okay!

The kicked-flying Haruka finally understood the situation and worried about him.

But Moroha replied as if rebuking and jumped backwards with all his strength.

The pursuit of *Shade* was about to approach.

The five claws raised a buzz.

Yes, the right arm that Moroha should have cut off had regenerated. *Labyrinth* and the *satana* lines weren't connected, this recovery was completely made by its own ability.

A black sphere emerged around the left side of the chest of *Shade*.

This was the central part of the Evil Spirit class. The core that stored an immense amount of *satana*.

The Evil Spirit class began to overflow the *satana* from there and performed a physical regeneration at the expense of consuming it.

Moroha jumped and stepped back.

Shade went after him.

The tip of the claws cut Moroha's bangs, gently falling down as if dancing. It was exactly an evasion by a hair's breadth.

Shade didn't have consideration and raised its left arm overhead again.

The cornered prey attacked consecutively so as to not let him get away.

- W-wait!

Haruka slashed at *Shade* from behind.

Since it was stubbornly fixated on the pursuit of Moroha, its composition was sliced off by Haruka.

Shade didn't stop the chase.

However, it perfectly dealt with Haruka.

The body of the Evil Spirit suddenly split into two.

A clone. □Donrou□. Such word came to Moroha's mind.

Shade α continued going after Moroha and *Shade* β turned around, intercepting Haruka.

—Let me hear your *screeeeaaams*!

Moroha managed to stop the blow with the sword, but his abdomen was immediately pierced by the claws on the other side.

Haruka was completely taken by surprise and mowed down in that state; five scars were carved into her slender body.

Fresh blood danced.

Shade's body returned to one, Tanaka threw knives to try taking advantage of it, but it ended up escaping into the shadows.

There was no recoil or anything even when using a powerful technique such as clone attack.

If Tanaka hadn't covered them with the knives, in all probability, they would have been chased. Aside from Moroha, Haruka was in danger.

Blaise was also dumbfounded and forgot to use □Flash□.

- W-what do we do, Moroha...

On the verge of tears, Haruka came near him.

Moroha stood back to back and both of them covered each other's blind spots as if to say that *Shade* could appear from anywhere.

- Setting "Komon" aside, no attack reaches him even if "Donrou" is used, it's invincible. Like Tekka-san.
- Bringing up our common sense to a "Metaphysical" opponent is irrational, isn't it?

Morooha felt around his stomach and confirmed that the wound was superficial.

On the spur of the moment, he had concentrated "High Durability" there.

- Don't crack jokes!

Haruka was also fine. The wound didn't seem to be deep.

- On a serious note, and from my point of view, "Komon" is way scarier.
- Fue...?

The back of Haruka put against his back twitched.

A sort of dubious sign was transmitted across her back.

- Should I restate it in an easy-to-understand way? **If it's us**—we can do something like gapless "Donrou", no?

- Oh...!

Once again, the back of Haruka put against his back twitched.

However, this time, motivation was transmitted across her back.

- Which way will we go, Morooha?
- From the side we're attacked first.
- Alright. Got it.

A conversation transmitted only between them.

Both Tanaka and Blaise were perplexed.

- Please use "Flash" one more time.

However, when Morooha entrusted him with that matter, Blaise immediately obeyed.

It seemed that he got used to being given sudden and incomprehensible orders on a routine basis.

Light exploded, burning shadow after shadow to exhaustion.

Shade, who had lost its hiding spot, jumped out.

At the same time, it attacked Haruka.

- Like I'll let you do it!

Morooha turned around, lined up next to Haruka, exaggeratedly readied the sword again and displayed an interception stance with Haruka.

Sure enough, *Shade* would try to make a clone and deal with both of them.

- Momo-senpai.
- Yes!

Haruka moved forward first.

Her figure was divided. By 5.

Five clones as if to laugh at *Shade's* clones.

Slipping through the claws of the α and β *Shades*, the five Haruka attacked them with slashes.

The five Haruka immediately ran past from behind them and kept them at a distance, remaining on their guard.

However, and after she used a great technique, there was no change, and couldn't move due to the recoil.

Shade immediately dived into the shadows, and a moment later appeared behind Haruka, taking advantage of that gap.

- Are you sure you can ignore me?

However, he was not going to let it do it. Moroha sprung at *Shade* from behind again.

With the same "Donrou", with four clones.

He vigorously slashed four places—right arm, left arm, right leg and left leg—with four slashes.

—I can't hear! I can't hear! I can't hear that kind of thing at *aaaaaaaall!*

But *Shade's* limbs quickly regenerated, it couldn't be brought down.

It tried to swing its right arm backward toward Moroha who couldn't move after "Donrou", tearing him off.

Was he in a predicament? No, this was within their calculations.

- Are you sure you can ignore me?

Haruka, now recovered from the recoil, came to back him up.

She made five clones and hit *Shade*. She used "Donrou"t and immediately after she was unable to move thanks to the great technique among great techniques.

It was a high-risk Light Technique that could usually be used once.

However, when the users were two, the story changed.

If they released it alternately and covered each other's weak spots, the theory said it could be used continuously.

Moroha learned that when fighting with the Beletskaya twin sisters in Russia.

He went back to Akane Academy, consulted with Haruka about giving it a try but it was too hard to try doing it.

If they weren't perfectly synchronized, their cooperation would collapse, while one of them stiffened, the other one wouldn't be in a posture to use "Donrou"—something like that.

Moroha and Haruka weren't twins, they thought that perhaps it was impossible to materialize.

But Moroha and Haruka didn't give up and did special training after school.

This was the first debut of the results.

Tanaka was astonished as if forgetting he was in the middle of the battle.

- Unbelievable.... Even though the students who could master even "Donrou" were only you...

The untiring attempts that increased even the combination blows and combination attacks more and more beat Tanaka's heart.*

*TN: Combination blows is the furigana reading for swift continuous attacks and combination attacks is the furigana reading for inexhaustible continuous attacks.

- Let's keep pressing it as we are doing it in one go.
- I know that!

Moroha and Haruka attacked and attacked and attacked while making fine eye contact and minute adjustments to the timing of beginning with □Donrou□.

In the dim cave of flesh.

The five-cloned Haruka swung their swords, hewing *Shade's* afterimage. Without a moment's delay, the four-cloned Moroha cornered the real body. Without bearing it, *Shade* slipped into the shadow of the ground but it was brought into the open by Blaise's □Flash□.

Haruka ran up the wall and went after *Shade* who jumped into the air and escaped.

Moroha ran up the wall on the other side, taking a pincer attack stance. A combination that alternately released □Donrou□.

With it, they tried cornering *Shade* every second.

Shade couldn't notice or even afford to counterattack the exchange of continuous and powerful cloning techniques.

In other words, Moroha and Haruka dominated.

Since they concentrated their attention on the essence of □Godlike Movement□, Moroha took the lead and Haruka synchronized with him as if it were a dancesport.

It wasn't just a mere dance, but a dance of drawn-moving swords.

The clad-in-white-*prana* Moroha and the clad-in-blue-*prana* Haruka drew dazzling light tails.

They ran on the walls, kicked the ceiling and filled the spacious cave, running about as they pleased.

That phase was practically an air battle.

Moroha and Haruka kicked no matter what was a foothold, jumbling and intersecting with *Shade* in the air.

Shade, who ran around trying to escape, was fast, but they still carved small wounds on it steadily.

Each time those wounds regenerated, *Shade's* black heart lost *satana*.

(If we keep attacking steadily like this, it will be our victory)

What was not straightforward was the nuisance of the bunch called □Metaphysicals□.

Moroha sunk deeply into his mind and concentrated again.

However—

An unexpected situation broke out suddenly, even for Moroha.

Something flashed ahead, in the back of his field of vision.

Exactly in the direction of the road that Moroha and the others came.

Light wasn't one of it.

Their number increased.

It wasn't 10 or 20. Not even 100 or 200.

The light filled the high-ceiling wide passage.

And closed in.

They were butterflies.

Thousands of butterflies with electric bodies flapped their wings.

- Wicked Spirit species!? No, they're small...

Tanaka was confused.

They were unidentified. Where did they come from?

No—think about it later.

He couldn't let something like this flood him.

Moroha moved to the front to intercept them, bore the brunt of the attack and started spelling.

If those were really Wicked Spirit species, Light Techniques wouldn't work.

He couldn't leave this to Haruka or Tanaka.

- Moroha! Behind you!

Haruka's warning came there. A killing intent from behind.

Shade was creeping soundlessly.

Countless electric butterflies in front.

The silhouette of death behind.

A perfect and unparalleled pincer attack stance.

Moroha was driven to an inescapable situation.

Chapter 7: The Impact

Swordsman and fist fighter faced each other.

On one hand, there was Edward dressed in silver armor and helmet, welding a long sword with both hands.

On the other hand, a [Metaphysical] whose whole body was made of steel and who swung both steel fists.

Two warriors who had something to communicate.

The biggest difference between the two was that the height of the fist fighter was over 30 meters.

The *Fortress* "Statue".

If forcibly compared to something, it was a steel bust with two arms.

Although it was much bigger than the Dreadnought class, its characteristic was that it was extremely small compared to other Stronghold classes.

However, it was a big mistake to think it was weaker than others. What was fearsome was its keen and nimble nature.

Despite its huge body, the speed of the punches unleashed by both arms was tremendous.

If he approached it carelessly, the steel fists, which were larger than the human body, would fly like a rapid-fire gun.

Without being able to see everything easily even with [Clairvoyance], he would end up being hit and crushed flat.

When it came to Edward, he sometimes hit back the fists with the long sword and sometimes received and endured them with the armor, holding his ground.

His majestic figure was in no way inferior to the heroes of mythical worlds who challenged terrifying giants without hesitation.

That was how he looked to AJ!

(Yes.... My lord... ♥)

In fact, no one was superior to Edward when it came to the ability of holding up the front line and taking on the [Metaphysical].

Since her master stood firm alone in the most dangerous area, AJ and the others should continue hitting and running away from the side and back of *Statue* without going too far.

Probably because everyone understood *Statue* was the scariest one, it didn't come to attack AJ and the others while turning its back on Edward. Of course, if it came, and it would come, they just had to scatter and run away. Believing that "Lampard the Rampart" would never be overtaken, the Dark Arts forces could attack at a distance of up to 50 meters. The British Headquarters chronically lacked talented *Dark Savors*, but if they were brought this near, their firepower could be used within limitations. These were surely Edward's tactics, the British Division which could exist solely thanks to Edward.

As long as there was the strongest piece which was him, the opponent wouldn't matter whether it was a Dreadnought class or a Stronghold class. The start was superb.

The front was stable and damage was dealt steadily.

Although all that was carved was regenerated, the exploration of Moroha and company would be much easier.

And around 15 minutes after the start of the battle—

– I deliver an order from the Japanese Division!

A person of the reserve corps who held a walkie-talkie in their hands shouted loudly.

AJ stopped attacking and asked loudly.

– Something happened!?

– Y-yes. The Japanese diversion forces were crushed already and *Seven Horns* headed for the *Labyrinth*!

– Crushed already!?

It was too soon—even if it wasn't AJ, she couldn't help but click her tongue.

– It cannot be helped.

Edward said as he easily stopped the steel fists of *Statue* which were larger than himself with the sword.

– I'll take charge of this guy alone, so I leave *Seven Horns* to you guys.

– But—

AJ refuted and held back from saying something.

Certainly, they had no choice.

If it was Edward, he could hold back *Statue* alone.

That was an absolute fact. Doubting so was betrayal.

The only question was whether or not they could take on a Stronghold class by themselves.

– If there are cowards who can't fight and who are going to hide behind my lord, step forward while you can!

With a bloodcurdling look in her eyes, AJ looked around at her companions. One imprudent person tried to raise their hand, but when he was glared at with mad dog-like eyes, they immediately withdrew their hand.

– There seems to be nobody! In that case, follow me!

She led all the men and women under her command, left Edward behind and changed direction.

The Dark Arts forces that couldn't use "Godlike Movement" were carried by the reserve squad.

(... I have a strange feeling)

Whenever AJ fought, she fought while staring at the back of Edward who fought alone on the front line.

Or fighting, doing a pincer attack with Edward like in this battle with *Statue*.

Now, AJ was in a state where her back and Edward's back were facing each other, this was the first time—they did something like this, and somehow, a strange feeling poked her chest.

If arrogant words were allowed, it appeared as if they entrusted their backs with each other....

- I'm fired uuuuuup!

She ran through the unpleasant and extremely damp ground in one breath and saw the target ahead.

The *Seven Horns* was crouching near the *Labyrinth*.

What it was doing was obvious.

The electric butterflies were born inexhaustibly between the seven horns from which its name was derived and slipped into the body through the caves on the body surface of *Labyrinth*.

The so-called electric butterflies were soldiers guarding the stronghold. They were heading in large numbers to kill Moroha and the others who invaded the center.

She felt like cold water was poured on her, her raised morale vanished. Instead, her field of vision turned red with anger.

- Hurry up!

AJ accelerated noticeably.

Her feet running through the mud got heavily dirty.

- Please wait, AJ-san!

Suddenly, a bold voice came from the side.

She didn't know who it belonged to, but it was poor English.

- Draw back! I'm in a hurry!

- Listen as we run! There's a trick to fight with the Stronghold class!

AJ came to her senses.

When she noticed, the "Saviors" of the Japanese Division were coming from the side.

Their number was no more than 5. Were they the survivors who escaped the destruction? However, when looking closely at them, they were all familiar to her.

They were A-Rank *Light Savors*, including Tabata Katsuie.

Maybe they resented it to a large extent because they went through the bitter experience of being almost perfectly crushed.

All five of them had a ferocious look in their eyes.

Guys like this were always useful.

- I don't have time. Keep it short.

AJ listened to their words without slowing down.

After Tabata issued the withdrawal order—

As the five of them went after *Seven Horns* that went away, they thought about the cause of their defeat.

Even if they just went after it without pressing it, they might repeat the same stupidity.

They hoped for certain victory and mobilized an unprecedented force of 200 people.

Even if Suruga Andou wasn't here.

Even if their conditions differed from the troops of other countries which were protected by Edward and Charles.

Of course, they thought they could do it.

(I'm proud when I think about it...)

Conversely, when the Stronghold class appeared off the coast of Yamaguchi prefecture, they saw the reason why Isurugi and the others fought.

At that time, the *Strikers* broke the withdrawal order and fought against the Stronghold class with a few people.

In other words, they were dead soldiers.

Perhaps their determination was different even before appearing in the battle.

This time, Tabata and the others were in a cloudy state.

(I noticed that way too late...)

Tabata looked around at the four companions who remained around him.

The fighting spirit in the eyes of everyone was dark and smoky like glowing ember.

If these eyes were made by all 200 people from the beginning...

(I can't help but lament. We have to do it, the five of us. Only the five of us)

What remains, is it something we can do?

Tabata seriously considered it.

What is at stake is the life of my companions, my life and the life of everyone else.

He certainly thought desperately. Help, maybe?

Something flashed into his mind.

The numbers of *Strikers* was extremely small, they proudly fought with the Stronghold class on the coast of Yamaguchi prefecture.

Tabata and the others had numerical superiority and were stomped by *Seven Horns* with a single stroke.

(Isn't their number small for fighting?)

(Rather, how can a small number fight?)

That Stronghold-class giant and the existence of "bugs" that could attack in a wide area were just about to kill the armed forces.

If that was the case—

- I see, interesting...

Upon hearing the summarized explanation of Tabata, AJ grinned.

As she ran, she looked back at her companions and gave an order.

- Only the A-Ranks will attack! All the rest protect the Dark Arts forces from the □Bugs□. Even the Dark Arts forces will give maximum priority to the elimination of □Bugs□. If you have time for it, attack the main body, understood!?

Placing the trailing forces like that, she suddenly accelerated again.

It was a method that came to mind on the spur of the moment, but she praised her own wares quite a lot. Making her allies stay together and follow the rules from the beginning and being able to rampage without restraint was truly AJ's choice.

- Those who attack will only aim at its legs. Do what Isurugi does.

Tabata, who came along with her, interjected and AJ acknowledged him.

Even if the legs are smashed, they'll be regenerated, but if they keep smashing them for a while, they should be able to limit its movements.

If that giant ran around them, it would be unbearable.

The number of A-Ranks in the British Division like AJ and the others was of 7 people.

Seven Horns had six legs.

Calculations said two people should smash one leg.

- Make a pair with me.

A dark-skinned woman ran side by side.

AJ didn't remember her name, but it was Wadatsumi Kaya.

- I'm interested in how much of a *Shirogane* the one called "the right arm of Sir Edward" is.

- Don't hinder my job, young girl.

- You're my senior!? —I mean, that's okay, Nee-san. But remember this. I'm Wadatsumi from Hakata branch office, so my name is quite popular.*

*TN: This Wadatsumi is the furigana reading for "sea god".

- I'm not aware of it. What rural area is that?

- Hakata is a metropolis!

As they cracked jokes, the twelve most elite members of both armies arrived at the location of *Seven Horns*.

Smiling as if baring her fangs, AJ let Kaya accompany her. Her eyes were pleased. She had the smell of a mad dog.

The pairs spread in six directions.

AJ and Kaya were in charge of the right front leg.

AJ split the double-headed sword into two from the start and hacked the foot to pieces with both hands.

Without bearing it, the *Seven Horns* raged in pain.

AJ, who was kicked by the giant leg, didn't bear it either, pulling back for a moment and poisoning herself again for a charge.

Suddenly, a chill—a sign that the inorganic compound eyes of *Seven Horns* were looking at her.

In fact, the demon stopped sending electric butterflies inside *Labyrinth* and flooded the twelve swordsmen gathered at its feet.

(With this, I shouldn't worry about Moroha for the time being...)

However, it was still too early to be relieved, and with the sight of the electric butterflies that filled the sky to capacity descending on them, even AJ felt shivers.

Smashing the feet of the main body while driving those things away was something hard to do—

– Leave the disposal of the butterflies to me, Nee-san!

Kaya bent the whip made of water and mowed down the electric butterflies. Leaving aside the matter of whether it was her "Mars" or "The Origin", this was the perfect weapon for this situation.

With this, AJ could concentrate on attacking the foot of the main body. But when she saw that the seven horns began an even greater electrical discharge, she clicked her tongue.

– Tch. There were more of them?

She feared that, as advised by Charles, a very powerful, long range lightning attack would come.

If so, she had no choice but to jump and dodge it at the same time it fired it. AJ stood ready, strained her eyes and stared fixedly at the horns on its head in the distance.

At that moment.

**Boom*—*

A sound so heavy and loud that even reverberated inside her roared.

Something flew over the sky filled with electric butterflies to capacity as if tearing it to pieces.

Something similar to a black cannonball as if made of condensed darkness. It directly hit the smallest horn of the *Seven Horns*.

A deafening-like explosive sound and a crashing sound echoed.

In front of the eyes of AJ who unconsciously stopped plugging her ears, the horn of over 10 meters in length was broken. It snapped. And fell down.

– What the!?

The roar of a cannon reverberated once more and a jet-black cannonball cut off the air, hitting and breaking the second smallest horn.

The immense lightning attack that *Seven Horns* had accumulated also dispersed before being fired.

What the hell had happened?

Normally one would think it was an attack by means of Dark Arts, but AJ didn't know a Dark Arts user who could show such power from the troops in the back.

Did someone in the unit suddenly awaken and remembered a powerful "The Origin"?

No, there was no way that it was such a ridiculous thing.

□Ancestral Arts□ weren't that cheap.

If one practiced the techniques one had in dreams again and again in the real world, one would regain the physical sensation of it and finally take hold of it. Apart from AJ who suddenly remembered it and had some experience, reaching the point of suddenly using it on the spot was beyond common sense even for a □Savior□.

Then what was that?

AJ forgot to swing her sword and looked back, behind the battlefield. The swarm of butterflies stopped attacking AJ and the others and flew there like clouds and haze.

That something *Seven Horns* couldn't bear to overlook was there too.

The reserve forces in the rear and the Dark Arts forces were separated left and right without any command.

They made way to let that something pass through.

When she witnessed its identity,

- Huh!?

AJ let out a hysteric voice.

That thing that appeared was that odd.

To use a simile, it was a mechanical tortoise.

Steel shell. Caterpillar tracks instead of limbs. And a gun turret stuck out instead of a neck.

A strange thing that could only be called... a turtle tank appeared with an imposing air.

It advanced while making manly caterpillar track sounds, shooting a bullet with a triumphant bombarding sound and breaking the third smallest horn. Probably because it had a built-in speaker, a human voice was heard from inside the turtle tank.

□Uhyo hyo hyo hyo! Did you see it? Did you see my always hitting bull's-eye? Because I'm in the Genius-Rank with a sense of bombardment, could this be the return of an even greater multitalented entertainer Leonardo da Vinci like me? You see, this is something you have to praise, don't you think? You have no choice but to transmit it to future generations.

□Kamekichi Mannendou—he who is a match for thousands□ or something like that! □

□I am really sorry for being late! The poor mobility is a point that will need improvement in the future. In any case, due to the imperial command of Paris Saint-Germain, I, the first knight, have come to assist like this!□

□I also apologize! But-I'd-like you to forgive me.... The hero always comes late, you seeeee? Uoooh, I'm super cooOOooOO!□

AJ was amazed.

She wasn't familiar with the name of Kamekichi Mannendou but when it came to Charles' first knight, the mysterious French Zlatan, then that was impossible.

If that was the case, then this odd weapon was a golem he made?

A manned golem, even fantastic stuff had a limit.

She had heard that Zlatan was placed as reserve corps during the briefing, but to think he would appear like this. *If only my lord had told me a word about this. How unkind. But that's good.*

At any rate, it was a powerful reinforcement.

Companions showed in with acclamation.

But AJ suddenly realized,

– How are you so calm, coming out to the front so shamelessly!?

Since it had such a long range attack, there was no reason to expressly be on the front line.

It became the prey of the butterflies.

AJ thought so, but,

□There's nothing to worry about, my lady. This is our job as knights. Please watch□

The turtle tank advanced without fear.

Recklessness had a limit, but they weren't going to stop or listen.

In an instant, the rushing butterflies swarmed it frighteningly in swarms.

The people near the turtle tank escaped suddenly.

The live butterfly-shaped electric shocks exploded as soon as they swarmed the tank, attacking it incessantly as they met their end.

Hundreds and thousands of times.

Being swarmed like this gave no chance of standing against it.

– I told you so!

AJ covered her face.

But,

□A certain alloy can collect just the strong points of multiple metals and minerals—□

The turtle tank continued bombarding solemnly, without a feeling of caring about it.

□—The electric resistance of mica is more than 10^{13} □

There wasn't a single scratch on the armor.

□You won't stop us unless there's a trillion of you!□

□Now, it is time for the counterattack. Crossing swords with a mighty and great opponent certainly is the long-cherished desire of a knight. Honor is the only thing that is always rolling in my path!□

The plunging turtle tank scattered the electric butterflies and spouted flames from the gun turret as it created a cloud of dust with the caterpillar tracks.

That thing was so majestic it couldn't be seen as odd anymore.

The bombardment increased as soon as a horn regenerated, now three horns were always broken.

Probably because of that, even the number of the electric butterflies that were born suddenly fell.

– Kukuh. The consequences are finally coming, aren't they?

AJ perceived that by her sense of smell, not by her tactical eye.



Countless electric butterflies ahead.
The silhouette of death behind.
A completely unparalleled pincer-attack stance.
Moroha, who was driven to an inescapable situation, finished spelling magic characters without being perturbed.
- What is born from water, Returns to water And collapse
Releasing a convergent torrent from the left hand, he swung it as if it were a sword, mowing down the electric butterflies.
At the same time, he turned around, swung the holy sword in his right hand and cleared away the claws of *Shade* that approached from behind from the elbow.

—My eeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeears

Shade writhed in pain.
- You won't perturb Moroha!
There, Haruka struck its body with a ramming attack and rolled on the ground so that she could bring *Shade* along with her.
To reward her good judgment, Moroha continuously fired Dark Arts of water with Blaise, wiping out the electric butterflies.
The number that descended on them at the beginning was absurd, but without a following, they could be wiped out soon. It didn't took a long time because Haruka and Tanaka crossed swords with *Shade* and kept it entertained.
Eliminating his anxieties, Moroha confronted *Shade*.
He held his sword and surrounded it with Haruka and Tanaka.
He stood stock still for a short while and narrowed the distance slowly but steadily to *Shade* who made its shoulders go up and down as if breathing heavily.
The right elbow of *Shade* that had just been cut off began to regenerate.
Moroha glanced at the sphere that fit into the chest of the Evil Spirit.
At first it was pure black, but it had become half around it, it was gray now.

Compared to the toughness of the headless Evil Spirit class which had been reduced approximately to the same level after eating all the fierce attacks of Charles, this felt meagre in that respect.

When the end of the right elbow was completely regenerated, *Shade* raised it overhead.

They were still far away from *Shade*.

What is it going to do? Moroha put himself on guard.

Suddenly, and before their eyes, *Shade* thrust its own claw into its heart.

—Listeen! Listen, I tell *youuuuuu*! Use whatever *methoooooooood*!

A large crack ran in the gray core.

From there, *satana* gushed out with an extraordinary force.

A dense and negative force so dark that it could be clearly seen.

Shade wore a black miasma like *Shiroganes* put *prana* on their whole bodies.

—First of all, let me hear about *youuuuuu*!

Making the miasma sway from its whole body like a heat haze, *Shade* swooped down on Haruka.

Making impressiveness that looked like firm conviction overflow, it raised the claws overhead.

– I won't let you do it!

Haruka wasn't overawed.

After seeing the movement of *Shade*, she made a start and engaged the approaching enemy directly opposite with a dash.

The perfect timing to take a Go no Sen.

Haruka's sword penetrated the core of *Shade* before the claws were swung down.

However, it was an afterimage! The swing missed.

The real body of *Shade* went round and cut in behind her.

No, not only behind her.

The figures of *Shade* that attacked Haruka were above her, at her right, left and feet!

A way of walking like it mixed □Komon□ and □Donrou□.

It made afterimages, attacking the unguarded enemy and immediately connecting clone attacks, the only way to call that was Demon Techniques.

The tenacity of the Evil Spirit that made *satana* overheat and that fought, shortening its life.

– Kuh...

Moroha, who had tried to cover for Haruka immediately, hesitated as he held his sword.

The limit Moroha could make clones with □Donrou□ was four.

Right now, the number of *Shades* that attacked Haruka was five.

He fell short by one.
Then Haruka would suffer damage.
If so—
(The hell with it...)
Moroha tried to rush to Haruka to put himself between them as a shield.
Then, the very instant he took a step.
His eyes met Haruka's eyes.
Their gazes crossed in the world of a fraction of a second.
Enough for their thoughts to be transmitted.
(Don't worry)
Haruka's eye contact.
(More importantly, go for **that**)
Taking that intent, Moroha obeyed without hesitation.
He didn't need to go save her. Instead,
- Oooooo...

The seven gates in his whole body were fully opened and his *prana* was drawn especially from the point below the navel.
The inexhaustible springing power was poured into Saratiga.
At the same time.
He exercised his *mana* and put characters into written form in the air.

The 5 *Shade* approached from five sides, wearing a cold killing intent and devastating *satana*.
An encirclement as if it were a giant black palm that tried to crush Haruka.
(Calm down, me...)
Haruka told herself.
(What's important is courage. It's what I lack the most)
Now it should be the time to muster that.
If she was intimidated here again, Tekka wouldn't forgive her.
And above all—
(I won't have the nerve to face Moroha!)
A strong light of will was lighted in the eyes of Haruka and the *prana* of her whole body wavered like a blue and shining flame.
The siege attack of *Shade* was closing in on her.
At this rate, Haruka's body would end up being torn apart—it would have looked like that.
To the ones around her.
Haruka created an afterimage with the way of walking [Komon] and escaped before she was crushed by the encirclement as if spilling from its hands.
As if to return the favor, the clone melted away and went round and cut in behind *Shade*.
After she forced herself with five clones and swung and missed, she stared fixedly at the back of *Shade* which was in a posture as if falling forward.
But,

—Bare your heart! And let me hear you *directlyyyyyyy*!

Shade tried to tear off the flesh around its shoulders, forcibly waving its arms to the back, attacking Haruka.

The claws on both arms were coming close to her.

At this rate, Haruka's chest would end up being pierced—that was how it looked like.

To the ones around her.

The body of Haruka, which should have been impaled, disappeared like a mist.

In other words, this was also an afterimage.

Two □Komon□ in a row.

Until now, it wasn't like it was impossible.

However, in actual fighting, Haruka **didn't have the courage** to use her trump card even once.

The real Haruka turned in front of *Shade* again, brought her body down, stretched like a spring and drove an upper cut into its stomach with all her strength.

The collapsed posture of *Shade* who excessively attacked and used way of walking had no way to avoid it.

A clean hit.

But there was a miscalculation. The body of *Shade* was surprisingly heavy (It was no surprise □Metaphysicals□ broke the rules), so the □Strength□ of the speed-specialized Haruka could make it float about a meter only.

– Your teacher shall help you too.

Tanaka provided protection there.

He kicked flying *Shade* who danced in the air and launched it even higher. Making its limbs flap, the silhouette flew through the air.

This meant that even such a cheating creature didn't have flying abilities.

– Do it, Moroha!

Looking up, Haruka screamed.

– Here I go—

Moroha gave a short answer.

The holy sword in his right hand was already filled with the whitest glimmer in the 3D universe.

The fingertips of his left hand already finished spelling a one-line phrase.

– Flutter, fluttering wings of the phoenix As light and pale as sparks Release me Untie me from the constraints of gravity immediately.

Ancestral Arts Dark Arts □Decrease Weight□.

Weight left Moroha's body.

The false domain of the Shinsen.

He held his breath like a speed racer and ran off.

He made his speed explode with □Donrou□.

The figure of Moroha was blurred many times. He made clones.
One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine people—
Nobody, not even Tekka, had reached a world that had never been reached.
– Raaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!
He soared.
The “Ars Magna” in the sword blade drew nine traces of white light.
Towards *Shade* who couldn’t move at all in the air.
Just like that, a nine-headed dragon bared its fangs to heaven. The nine
Moroha swung their sword.
Nine cuts—
To the head, right shoulder, left arm, right shin, left thigh, right side, trunk,
abdomen and black heart of *Shade*.
The whole body of the Evil Spirit was slashed thoroughly.
Moroha soared to the sky as he was and returned to a single body with a
sword-swinging posture.
Moroha was able to master nine clones by bringing his own weight to zero
by means of Dark Arts.
However, losing weight also meant losing the power of the sword.
The critic of Edward which said “it doesn’t make sense” was not wrong.
However, he didn’t know.
That Moroha, who held the holy sword Saratiga in his hand, had a trump
card called “Mars”.
It was ridiculous to discuss the power of the sword, the absolute concept
that cut when touched.
Therefore, the combination of “Decrease Weight”, “Donrou” and “Mars”.
Later on, the White Knight Organization would name it as:
Ancestral Arts Yin Yang “Hydra”.

The sensation of being pulled by gravity returned.
Moroha stared at a point in the air as he surrendered himself to the free
fall.
Similarly, Haruka, Blaise and the others were also looking up as if eating
into it.
For some reason, Tanaka had a reflecting expression and pointed to that
point.
– Hey. It’s your victory.



The place where the eyes of everyone gathered.
The sign of being cut into pieces in the sky, of the body of *Shade* crumbling down and of the black heart being cut in two.
A pale glitter flickered.
Moroha already knew. It was the brightness of the soul.
In the end, the light that kept dispersing for a while gathered in one place.
Like pointillist painting, it took the shape of a person.
It looked like a middle-aged man with sunken cheeks and rolled eyes.
- Office Head Kashiwaba...
The two of the members of the Internal Audit Office muttered in unison, sounding nostalgic.
Kashiwaba's soul looked down at them, extended his hand,
□Listen—□
He began to say as if making an appeal.
Being tense, Moroha also listened carefully.
□—The influence of the □Demon□ was more powerful than we expected.
Even when confining Shiba Akira, it didn't end. The remnant who claims to be the king and those who call themselves "Six Wings" are still operating behind the scenes. That "Invisible" was one of them□
Each word Kashiwaba said contained vocabulary Moroha knew and didn't know, the meaning of them was and wasn't connected, and that was frustrating.
He needed to hear more details. However, every time Kashiwaba spoke, the brilliance that composed his body drifted into the air as if fusing with the wind.
□Please, convey my report! We severely belittled them.... □Metaphysicals□ are by no means a natural occurrence, and their "Shaman" is—□
His words came to an end as the last fragment of brilliance drifted.
- This is damn serious.
Haruka was greatly perplexed.
But Moroha moved his neck to the left and right.
- It cannot be helped. Let's hurry our mission.
Everyone nodded.
Blaise dived into Moroha's shadow and the two members of the Internal Audit Office shouldered the unconscious Suzuhara.
- Thank you, Haimura-kun.
- You can listen to the continuation of the Office Head's words afterwards and as much as you want.
They thanked him,
- Well, I didn't do this alone.
Moroha replied as he looked at Haruka, Tanaka and his own shadow.
Then turned his eyes to the depths of the cave, strained his eyes and ran off to the darker side of the *satana*.

His path was still gloomy, and the depths of the depths couldn't be seen through in the darkness.

Nevertheless, and unlike when they were advancing while being cautious about where *Shade* was hidden, it didn't look that much uncanny, the humans gloated over a calculating thing.

With Moroha as the lead, they headed for the central part of the *Labyrinth* in a row again—



Shade fell.

In other words, there was no need to conceal their footing anymore, they could run with all their strength.

The five people who excelled at □Godlike Movement□ ran as fast as they could.

Calling it fast didn't do justice.

Moroha and company dashed like a cool breeze blowing through the cave where even the air was stagnated with the dense *satana*.

No matter how complicated the road might branch off, the powers of observation of Moroha immediately read the correct route.

Everyone outside was doing their best. The structure of the maze remained stable until the end.

Doing this and reaching the central part at last in a short time wouldn't have been possible without everyone's abilities and cooperation.

A hall-shaped space wider than the martial arts stadium of Akane Academy. The air was sticky and full of *satana*, so much that it made them feel like it was uncomfortably twisting around them.

One hundred people were lying down there.

They thought that Kashiwaba Gen'ichi was surely awake, but the person in question wasn't found. Unexpectedly, even if the soul returned to the body, he might not wake up immediately. Because of that, it seemed natural to think that Tekka was in time to extricate Flavie.

Moroha forgot about it for a moment,

- Blaise-san.
- Understood.

Being called, Blaise emerged from the shadow.
What he had in his hand was a high purity crystal ball.
A "The Origin" borrowed from one of the *Les Éléments*. Simply put, Moroha had heard that it was as effective as a TV camera.
Through this, the state of the central part of *Labyrinth* was now being shown outside.
The ones seeing it were the owner of the crystal ball and principal Mari.
"Transportal" had the limitation that "the scene where the gate is opened has to be clearly remembered".
When actually seeing the actual place in the image, the image wasn't that much definite.
They had to wait for a short while—
Mari's magic circle appeared as if a shining spring gushed out of the ground.
Now, the central part of *Labyrinth* was connected to the mountainside of Mt. Amigasa (The northwestern part of Mt. Nokogiri) where they had set up a waiting place and now they were able to come and both ways.
- We kept you waiting, Moroha!
The very first person who showed up as if jumping out of the pale light formation was Leshya.
Seeing the safe appearance of Moroha, she felt relieved, but she immediately tightened her facial expression,
- The receiving system over there is ready.
She energetically carried all the people who got their souls pulled out with "Strength" and threw them into the magic circle.
It was reckless, but this was an emergency and a race against time.
As he apologized in his heart, Moroha threw the people who didn't recover their consciousness to the other side of the magic circle.
As soon as everyone were moved and they were done, they escaped using "Transportal".
Only Moroha was left behind.
He still had a task to do.
When he looked up at the ceiling, he could see something like a giant pulsating heart. As reported by Flavie.
The origin of all blood vessels that ran all over the maze.
There was literally no difference from the central part of *Labyrinth*.
If so, he would destroy it.
- Write—
He focused on his left hand.
At the bottom of his mind, the sparks that were obstructed by something like a wall from the inside scattered.
He closed his eyes and chanted.

Dance Dance Thunderscale Dragon

*Give rise to thunderclap and blue lightning
No one lives forever in this world In a moment, a flash, the pleasure is
consumed
Abandon everything in the blink of an eye
Those who are late, do not regret it Tonight is the feast of slaughter
Die, die, die, die
Life and everything falls and dies The liberation of the soul shall not be easy
Take off the weight of the fine feathers Soar through the heavens and earth,
and do not give all the people this sensation
Oh death How delightful you are!*

9th Rank of Thunder, [Thunderbolt Dragon].

The blue lightning dragon that surged from the left hand of the carefully-observing Moroha struck its fangs into the heart on the ceiling, bit a hole in it, indulged in it more and went up and up while clearing the way. The extremely severe thunder and atrocious destructive sounds roared all over Arasawa. Therefore, anyone standing on the battlefield couldn't help but stare in the direction the *Labyrinth* was enshrined.

They couldn't help pay attention to the monster which was as huge as the rocky mountain and to the blue lightning dragon that bit a hole in it from the inside, rushed out like an eruption and soared to heaven.

Following the thunder dragon that disappeared over there, they couldn't help but gaze admiringly at the majestic figure of Moroha who flew high in the sky.

- Welcome home! Nii-sama!

Satsuki was delighted.

- I protected them earnestly until your return, you know?

Satsuki threw out her chest.

- Yeah... he's too far...

Isurugi became ecstatic.

- A guy who can only be flashy every single time.

AJ pouted.

To say nothing of those who weren't familiar with Moroha, they were astonished by the way of his non-standard entrance, they even felt they were in the presence of something nonsensical, rather, something divine, for the first time.

Tabata Katsuei, who was engaged in battle with *Seven Horns*, was touched by the incomprehensible and dazzling *prana* of Moroha, he solidified in that posture, with the iron hammer raised overhead.

- That's... Haimura Moroha... isn't it...?

He could tell at a glance.

It was the same kind as Suruga Andou.

His figure that wore white-light glistening *prana* in the heavens was as if matched the sun.

- Now, let's get ready for the hunting time!

Confirming that Moroha had defeated *Labyrinth*, Edward got motivated. A shoulder tackle hit hard the very fist of *Statue* that swung the strong fist downward.

Using □Hagun□, the way of walking Shukuchi.

Immediately after Edward disappeared, and as if skipping frames in a movie, the next moment he rushed from the top of the shoulders and pulverized the steel fist of *Statue*.

Statue threw a punch at him with the opposite hand while staggering.

Due to the kick of using □Hagun□, Edward, who couldn't move, had no way of dodging it.

However, he had no reason to dodge it because he was clad in silver armor and helmet.

He recovered from the stiffness as if nothing had happened, and the other party was crushed into pieces with the extremely fast tackle.

Labyrinth was dead, and *Statue* with its *satana line* not working could no longer regenerate.

- Dandandanda, dadandan, dandadanda ♪ Dandandanda, dadandaaaan ♪.

The high-in-spirits Edward charged over and over while humming a tune.

He ran past from behind it to the left and right at an immeasurable speed, driving tackles into it and crushing *Statue* until there was no undamaged part.

In short, this was the same idea Isurugi Jin arrived at in the past.

However, this was far more powerful and perfect.

A power technique that made his kinetic energy explode at the extreme speed of □Hagun□, changed the hardest □Silvery□Argusten in the world into a cannonball and slammed against the opponent. The effect was great because it was simply unrivaled.

He turned the strongest armor into the strongest armament.

Usually, Edward stood firm in one place, carried his subordinates on his back and fought while protecting them.

Therefore, this was a forbidden move he imposed on himself that could only be used at a time like this.

- Too slow. I told you not to keep me waiting.

After confirming that Moroha had defeated *Labyrinth*, Charles made a surly face.

He gazed at the *Sea Anemone* crawling on the ground from the celestial platform,

- Repulsive. I can't stand seeing you any longer—

He put a spell of five lines into written form with the fingers of his right hand and similarly waved the five fingers of his left hand.
However, the phrases drawn in the air were separated to the left and right.
5th Rank Dark Art of Flames, [Black Gehenna].
5th Rank Dark Art of Ice, [Blizzard Dead].
That match.
- —Disappear at once.
Ordering with arrogance, he unleashed the essence of ice, flames and destruction.
Like the god of death with wings abreast, they rained incessantly on *Sea Anemone*, burning it thoroughly and freezing it completely. They made a chemical combination, causing a steam explosion and hollowing out the giant.
Despite being called PSG, the simultaneous development of two kinds of great magic required all his concentration.
And to **fire them continuously**, he sharpened his senses to the very limit!
A jack-o'-lantern was lit in Charles' right eye.
The remaining blue left eye was bewitchingly dyed in a red color.
Revealing the true nature of "Le Rouge et Bleu", he incessantly attacked and annihilated the extraordinary giant monster.

Edward and Charles brought down each enemy and fired the greatest power they had in succession.
Moroha roared as if groaning heavily and in a deep voice while seeing the situation from the zenith.
- oooooooooooooooooooooO...
He drew a huge amount of *prana*, poured most of it into Saratiga, filtered it and replaced it with tremendous power.
Then the sword blade of the readied, treasured sword sparkled brilliantly and whiter than white.
Far under his eyes, his target, the *Seven Horns*, remained.
The swinging sword flashed a little.
With that, it ended.
A single long, large and endless line ran in the sky as if chopping the entire battlefield.
It was the shape of Moroha's soul that cut down even the concept of "distance".
The straight line ran straight to the center of the giant body that exceeded 300 meters.
As if cutting in two with a single stroke.
The Stronghold Class, whose body was large and had no evasion abilities, was just a target for Moroha's [Mars].
In front of the concept of cutting, the life force of the monster that couldn't be easily defeated by 100 people was equal to garbage.



The deserted and desolated Arasawa was now wrapped up with loud cheers. They acclaimed the name of the three heroes and celebrated the victory they brought again.

Even when turning to the boy who slew *Seven Horns* from the sky with a single stroke, the ones who wavered their hands never stopped.

Moroha also responded by waving his hand while showing signs of embarrassment as he abandoned himself to the free fall.

And there was another person here.

- He surprised me in Yekaterinburg, but the Moroha I saw today is amazing too.

Leshya was also waving her hand at Moroha.

She looked up at him in the distance, admired.

She wanted to be immersed in that aftertaste for a little more, but unfortunately, she wasn't allowed to.

- Heey. Come give me a haaand.

Called by Haruka, she came to her senses. Halfway up Mt. Amigasa.

The waiting place where only a simple tent was set up, and where Mari was also waiting.

Without a moment's delay, Haruka was carefully laying down and lining up the transported people.

- Sorry. I'm going now.

- I'll take care of this side, so I leave that one to you.

Pointed by Haruka, Leshya agreed and moved.

Walking and avoiding the people who were carelessly thrown down, she cleanly put them down one by one from the end.

Although they were extricated from the central part of *Labyrinth*, there was no sign of them waking up immediately.

For the time being, there was no doubt that they were able to protect them in a safe place, so, after this, research would begin to wake up their consciousness.

- I pray that you guys will be saved too.

Leshya said so to herself.

Then—

- Do you know how difficult it is to save one person?

A voice called out to her from behind.

Contrary to the words, it wasn't a tone of voice that demanded an explanation, but rather a vague tone of voice.

It wasn't a familiar voice.

Due to her long-time habit, Leshya turned around while pulling a knife out of her bosom.

A woman with a hard-to-read facial expression stood there.

A boundless face that looked like it wanted to make the sound effect of [plain face].

She wore the combat uniform of the Japanese Division, but she was sure there wasn't such a woman before.

Where did she come from?

- Of course I know. Normally speaking, the act Moroha did, which was saving me, was like a miracle. Moreover, I can't do nothing but pray.

Leshya responded while appraising her, without letting her guard down.

- Li-chan is a kind child.

- Who's that?

She asked and the woman pointed to Leshya without hesitation.

- My name is Elena. People around me call me Leshya.

- Bit Li-chan is cuter.

- Cute? I see. I'm not familiar with the nuances of Japanese language, so I don't really know what cuteness is, but I shall receive it gratefully.

As she thought of getting Moroha to call her like that next time,

- May I hear your name, if that is not a problem?

- I'm Shiroy Usako. My friends call me Nelly.

- Nelly, huh. I think it's a cute nickname.

- ... This is the first time I wasn't questioned with [Where did you get that?].

The woman was surprised a little and showed something that resembled emotion for the first time.

- Where does Nelly belong to? Are you sure you can leave your post?

- I came to see Marishiten. That's my role. To meet her.

- That's a name I have no clue about, but whose nickname is this?

- It's the nickname of Shimon Mari. She's a scary woman like the god of war, that's the reason for Marishiten.*

*TN: Marishiten means Marici in Buddhism as it's the Buddhist god of war.

- She's a gentle person like an affectionate mother, so why is she Marishiten?

- Could it be that there are two Shimon Mari?

Nelly tilted her head to the side.

- I have heard that now she is the principal of Akane Academy.

- If that's the case, then it's the same person that I know.

I see, Marishiten, huh.

For Leshya, the impression the word made sounded mysterious. It was possible to say that the nickname matched the mysterious smile that Mari often showed on her face.

Without being able to understand this and that about the scary woman, she dropped the subject.

- I would like to see Marishiten.
- Understood. I will call her, so please wait.
- Li-chan is a kind child after all.
- Not really.

Without feeling bad for being praised, Leshya turned on her heels and went to call her.

Mari was sat in a folding chair below the tent, she was in a discussion with the old woman of [Les Éléments].

- Marishiten-dono. A woman named Nelly wants to see you.

As soon as she said so with a casual attitude,

- Eh?

Mari turned her face pale.

Leshya was surprised.

She was an adult woman who was always composed. It was unusual for her to have a face like this.

- Where is she!?
- T-this way.

Being asked so with a terrible menacing look, Leshya guided her while being overawed.

The face of Mari, who faced Nelly who waited for her, was as if she had seen a ghost.

Leshya didn't know what kind of relationship these two had.

- Long time no see. Marishiten.
- Shiroy-san...

Mari seemed like she couldn't speak for a moment,

- You were... alive? How...?
- You heard that I was "purged by Suruga Andou", right?

Leshya remained a spectator, but she was startled at the words that inevitably came out.

- Oh, I see... You were defeated by the old man, handed over to the Japanese Division, sentenced to capital punishment by the approval of Division Head Suruga—how do you think I felt hearing that!?

Mari disheveled her hair and shouted.

- It's a complete lie *pyon*.
- A lie *pyon*? ... Usako!
- Suruga Andou is a liar *pyon*. I'm alive. I have legs.

Nelly defensively pulled up the hem of her combat uniform and exposed her thighs.

Seeing that "I do things my own way" attitude, Mari, looking vexed, grieved with [You're that kind of person, huh],

- Is Shiba-kun alive?
- He is alive and kicking.
- Where is he?
- That is a secret. He wanted to greet Marishiten, but he was afraid of this child so I came instead.

Nelly once again pointed to Leshya.

- Because li-chan is “man-eater”.

What a cruel naming sense she had! Even though Leshya was delighted because she called her with a cute nickname. She felt betrayed.



- ... I'm Leshya.

She objected with a subdued voice.

- Do you prefer Taa-chan?

-

- Don't make a grim face like that. Even if you eat me, I'm not delicious, you know? You will get an upset stomach.

Whether she was making fun of her or saying it for real, Nelly's tone and facial expression were boundless like they were impossible to grasp.

- I will tell him that Marishiten seemed to be fine. That hat suits you so much.

Seeing her turn her back on them and taking her leave, she had a hard time deciding what to do.

If it was Leshya, it was easy to hold down such defenseless back.

Without being able to clearly discriminate if it was an enemy or not, taking such a violent action towards her made her hesitate.

- ... Thank you for coming and showing up.

Mari seemed to let her go without saying anything.

Then Leshya relaxed her shoulders.

When Nelly disappeared completely into the bushes, Mari put down the pointy hat.

Because tears accumulated in the corners of her eyes, Leshya patted her with gentle hands.

- Hey, Elena-san. Can you keep this a secret from everyone?

- My mouth is shut tight.

- Thank you.

With that, Mari ended up holding her tongue.

She just kept staring at her hat.

In the end, she didn't know who that woman named Nelly was and what her relationship with Mari was.

The atmosphere wasn't nice to ask amicably.

However, even Mari seemed to notice that Leshya had an inquisitive look.

She only told her one thing.

- This hat, she gave it to me.

Mari's hat had become her trademark, it was always put on her head.

What kind of person was Nelly who gave that to her? The mystery grew deeper and deeper.

However, even the quiet and unsociable Leshya could understand what Mari thought about Nelly.

Epilogue

Kai province was the province of hot springs.

In Ina City, Nagano Prefecture, which was nearby Nokogiri Mountain, there were many well-known hot springs, including that well-known hidden hot spring Shingen.

After the completion of the operation, the members of *Strikers* including Leshya and Shizuno were rewarded by Tabata Katsuie and got a room prepared at a small hot spring inn, saying "Take your time in the water then return, alright?"

As for the adults, they still had the difficult post-war processing, it seemed that only the students were allowed to take a break first. The captain and vice-captain joined the adults, they were chased for this and that report and miscellaneous matters, some people felt sorry, while others didn't hold back.

The men got all excited playing table tennis, Taketsuru and Souya were all sneaky, and the bath lovers heartily enjoyed the hot water from sunrise to sunset.

The one who went to the men's bath was Moroha.

No other customers were there, so he got to use it extensively.

When the water reached his shoulders and stretched his limbs, his tired body and mind gradually relaxed.

This was certainly an indescribable sensation. The efficacy of the hot spring or how small it was were unrelated to it. It was an open air bath, so he decided to enjoy the moon-view bath at night while viewing the autumn sky absentmindedly.

The women's bath was next to it, separated by a bamboo wall.

Satsuki asked aloud "how does it feel over there?" and Moroha replied, confirming each other.

He heard the merry voices of the other girls, and those were: Shizuno, Leshya, Haruka and Sophia.

- Ku~~~~~. It stings my wounds~~~.

- Bear with it, Satsuki. It was written on the signboard just now that "Wounded soldiers had a hot-spring cure in this area during the Warring States period".

- Even if you can't bear it, come to my room later. I will heal you with "Healing".

- Eh? I'll get Moroha to do that so no thank you?

- ... I'm telling you to come to my room. Got it?

- Ee□□□□□□□□.

- Choosing a man over female camaraderie. That's why you can't make friends.

- What did you say, Leshya!? You also were a loner until very recently!

- That's right. Even though I changed my mind, those were painful days. I just keep changing my mind now though.

- What's with that complacency!? And that triumphant look!?

- Stop quarreling in the bathroom. Haruka will also say a few words as your Senpai.

- Eh? Oh. I, I wonder about that...

- I saw her. Momochi Haruka already got □Healing□ from Moroha a while ago.

- Well, if you take in consideration her great efforts this time, then a benefit like that is appropriate for what she did?

- But I also did my best, Momo-senpai is a traitoor.

- I, I mean, I did say to him that it was embarrassing, but Moroha forcibly—

- How foul! Thinking you'll be forgiven if you appeal to a weak-willed woman, you have no guts!

The sound of splashing hot water.

- It cannot be helped, it cannot be helped!

The sound of splashing hot water happened again.

The sound of splash and splash competing with each other resounded for a while.

- You're old enough to know that, so stop acting like a child!

Dull sound

There was a dull banging sound and the repetitive splashing sound stopped.

□□I'm sorry...□□

Satsuki and Haruka apologized to Sophia in a crying voice.

Because they really looked like children, Moroha involuntarily chuckled.



- If you don't control yourself a bit, then Moroha who's next to us will overhear you, you know? You'll be laughed at, alright?

□□Guh...□□

Shizuno pointed that out maliciously and Satsuki and Haruka groaned in vexation.

Because his chuckling was detected, Moroha became alarmed.

- Hmm.... When I think again that Moroha is on the other side of this thin timber wall, I feel strangely anxious. My heart races.

- I can hear you, Leshya.

He wanted her to not blurt out anything strange. His heart was also racing.

- We might be able to peek through the bamboo, you know? Should we try it?

- Don't instigate them, Shizuno!

- It's a joke. Don't take me at my word.

Shizuno was just bantering with him, but,

□□□...□□□

For some reason, the other girls kept silent.

- It's a joke, right?

Moroha got away from the women's bath while showing a stiffened smile on his face.

It would have been great if they had kept calm,

- Hey, Moroha. Shall you get a modest present from me?

Shizuno began to say something fishy again.

What was she planning this time...?

- What kind of present?

Even though Moroha ignored her, Sophia ended up being immensely curious about it.

- Maybe provide a dreamlike situation for boys?

- Eh? What, what?

- I want to know too.

Even Satsuki and Leshya took the bait.

There was no one who would stop Shizuno anymore—

- Hyaaauh.

Suddenly, Haruka let out a small scream in a sexy voice.

Moroha was startled.

To say nothing of pricking his ears up. He was a boy.

On the other hand, Haruka, in an angry voice,

- What are you doing, Shizuno!?

- Uwaa. Senpai, your boobs are huge. Let me touch them.

- They aren't big though!? Is that a sarcastic comment!?

- But they have elasticity and the rubbing sensation is quite there.

- Don't give a brief review of them so calmlyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy.

Haruka shouted in anger. Her figure which was about to cry seemed to come into his mind.

- What are we going to do if Moroha hears us!?
- I've been telling you he's listening to us, no?
- Are you bullying me!? I'm going to cry. Get away from me.
- But I think Moroha will be happy. Isn't that true, Moroha?
- Sorry! Your voice is too far, I can't hear you!

Moroha shouted back with all his might.

His heart was racing and sounding but not like before.

He might have to pour water and not hot water on himself.

- Momochi-senpai, don't get agitated with this much, alright? It's not like it's a problem if you are heard. Rather, if you don't have the strong spirit to at least catch hold of the appealing spots, then I don't think you will catch up to us.

- What kind of appeal is that!? I'm not going to simply be exposed by a bully like you, uwaaaaaaan.

Haruka cried.

- Jeez, stop that already.

Moroha complained, but Haruka was so noisy he didn't reach them.

On the contrary—

- What looks so fun, girls!? I'll join you too!

An even noisier voice roared from the women's bath.

It was the arrival of the demon vice-captain who was released from the miscellaneous matters.

- Hmm? This is a bath. I thought it was a mixed bath?

The minute that she appeared, the ero demon Tokiko was at full throttle.

- You dodging the matter is daring. It's not pleasant at all!

Moroha felt *mana* swelling up from the other side of the bamboo wall.

Ah! He thought, but there was no way for him to stop that there.

The Dark Arts of wind released by Tokiko blew off the wall splendidly.

The division between the men's and women's bath disappeared and naked girls appeared.

- Tokiko, you pervert——!

Sophia turned her back on him in a hurry.

- Guwa□□□□□ha ha ha.

Tokiko laughed loudly in an imposing stance.

- W-what am I going to do if Moroha sees me□♥?

Satsuki blushed and hid her chest as she gave a glancing look at the men's bath.

- I think this is alright. The ventilation improved, and it's comfortable.

Although Leshya was submerged in the bathtub, she didn't try hiding at all. And Haruka was half-standing up, she was about to tear off Shizuno who rubbed her breasts from behind.

Using the hands of Shizuno as a bra, her important place was hidden.

Moroha saw.

The small dimple on Shizuno's face.

A devilish smile that only Moroha could see.

Shizuno put her hands away from the breasts of Haruka.
As it was said before, Moroha was a boy.
His eyes ended up being glued to the modest bulges and the graceful pink tips.

- Unyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaan.

Haruka's intense scream pierced through the bathroom, reverberating.
And went high and distant.
Later, they heard from Mari that it reached even the far Amigasa Mountain.



The waiting area halfway up Amigasa Mountain was crowded with people.
After the end of the operation, most of the people returned to Shiojiri branch office to receive treatment, on the other hand, the platoon captain class gathered here.

Furthermore, personnel were being gathered to transport the people who had their soul pulled out to Shiojiri branch office.

Instructions flew everywhere, high-spirited and understanding voices returned at them.

As if that hustle and bustle demarcated the world—

In one of the quiet and standing still tents, Edward and Charles looked grave.

They were lined up with a simple table put between them, listening carefully to a certain report.

People were strictly ordered to leave and Zlatan stood guard at the entrance.

Kneeled in front of them, the one who offered a full report to them was Blaise.

Edward scrutinized it in his mind for a moment,

- Kashibawa's soul was saying that Akira's gang controls the

□Metaphysicals□?

- As I stated a moment ago, each of my words tells the truth. I have confidence in my memory.

Blaise humbled himself and replied.

- Six Wings, huh.... They were against Six Heads? Isn't this a very interesting plot?

- Nonsense. What's interesting about it?

Charles spat out with a face as if he had swallowed a bitter bug.

- What you should have said is "boring".

- Blaise. Withdraw already. I, who felt kindness, letting this simpleton hear that, was a stupid.

- I'm sorry, I'm sorry! I apologize. I will do it seriously.

As expected, he was too candid. Edward regretted it.

- I don't think Kashiwaba is lying. That said, it's not good to believe that the investigation is accurate. Shall we try asking both parties? Akira was now... at the mansion of "the witch of the prison" right?

- Affirmative. I let Chloe go there long ago.

- Eh? What about Andou's permission? Did you get his agreement?

- You know, don't you? That's a waste of time.

- Your impatience is the master that truly gives rise to wasteful conflicts.

Edward shrugged his shoulders with an exaggerated gesture like an actor and Charles got annoyed and ignored him.

Rather than that, he glared at him,

- I said it, no? Shiba Akira should have been killed.

- Well, it was me who recommended to spare his life.

Edward recoiled and raised both hands.

- If it wasn't for the twist of fate, Akira would have become the reliable sixth person. Sooner or later, his anger will cool down when God plays with him.

- You're naïve. You who easily succumb to loneliness.

- Don't curse at me, saying I'm naïve. Even now, I'm strongly desiring that there's something wrong about this...

Edward rested his chin in his hands on the table and sighed in a big way.

Charles laughed scornfully at his sentimental attitude and said without reservation,

- But it's too late. That crucial Kashiwaba Gen'ichi isn't awaken yet, is he?

He glared outside the tent, tapping his feet.

Certainly, there were many things he wanted to listen from the mouth of Kashiwaba, the person in question.

- He doesn't look like he's going to wake up soon. Get An to look for him now.

Angela was ordered to transport the rescued people, and at the same time, was ordered to secure the nine people who were kidnapped by "Invisible". Before long—she changed her expression and came plunging into the tent.

- My lord!

- Ye-ah, it looks like it's bad. What? That's all, excuse me.

- T-that's! They couldn't be found... no matter how much I looked for them...

- ? Could this be?

- Yes.... They aren't. Neither Boris... nor Graham... are among those who were rescued.

Angela looked depressed, naming her comrades of the British Headquarters.

Edward covered his face with both hands and Charles grinded his teeth.

- Impossible. Could it be that all nine people are missing?

- No, I secured five of them, including Melaine Flamini who is in coma.

AJ replied in a tone of voice that lacked politeness to Charles.

Edward, his face still covered,

- Then four are missing, huh.... Who are the other two?

- Yes, my lord. Van Percy from America. And—Gen'ichi Kashiwaba.



Gen'ichi Kashiwaba woke up in a place similar to a school classroom.

Was the school closed? There were no voices from the students, but there was a sign of being deserted and abandoned.

As was the case with Flavie the other day, Kashiwaba couldn't understand the situation right away, his head was in chaos, he looked up at the ceiling in blank amazement while facing upward.

He listened without wanting to listen to the voices of the men who talked next to him.

□Alright! I won the bet, right? Right?□

□Fuuuuuck! How do I lose this quickly? I can go a bit longer!□

□Like I thought, Haimura is a monster. Your arrogance, yes your arrogance couldn't admit that□

A delighted voice and a vexed voice.

Both were conversing in a strong English accent.

Kashiwaba, with his head still unclear, shifted his attention to them as if he were enticed.

The two young men sat cross-legged on the ground were having some kind of argument.

Both were familiar faces.

The one wearing a cowboy hat was "Flash Sword" Leonard Van Percy.

The muscular one was "Blue Knight" Boris Terry.

Yes, Kashiwaba knew.

They were two wings of Six Wings.

Since Kashiwaba discovered the remnants of "Demon" with the notification of a certain informant, he stumbled upon them, the Six Wings, while gathering information and deliberately letting them go free one after another.

Then, after further investigation, and as he learned that they were even producing and controlling "Metaphysicals", he was tracked down by phone and attacked by "Invisible".

His memory came to an end there, but as he remembered various things, his thoughts were sorted in rapid succession.

(Why am I doing nothing...!? These guys!? Are the enemy!?)

Kashiwaba jumped up, took distance from the men and put himself on guard.

He put his hand in the pocket and revised the ID Tag. But there was nothing there, to say nothing of the thing that became a specialized weapon.

"Goddamit, it's my treat. I'm done with this, so let's deal with him and then go have a drink"

"Oh right, that Kashiwaba. Poor guy. After all, people that know too much are no good"

Boris and Leonard stood up relaxed.

With just that.

Kashiwaba's whole body was scorched by a strong killing intent and pressure; he sweated like his pores were open.

(Don't falter. I'm one of Japan's best "Godlike Movement" users...)

Withstanding the shivers, he slowly stepped back.

He had to get out alive of this place somehow, take refuge in some branch office and bring back the information.

"So that's your face that has confidence in escaping on foot? But I'm pretty fast too, you know?"

Leonard extended his left hand to the handle of the sword hanging on his waist.

Kashiwaba waited his chance to escape impatiently.

Leonard bent forward, readied his drawn sword and fixed his gaze on him with hawk-like eyes.

As they faced each other, the pressure that scorched Kashiwaba became intense.

In the end, and without bearing it, he tucked his tail between his legs and began to run to the window.

He grimaced. He was way desperate. He raised his face soaked in water as if indulging in air.

"Yup, I'm fast"

A laughing voice. Kashiwaba turned only his neck as if he were aroused by fear.

At that moment, and as if showing off, Leonard unsheathed the sword worn at the waist.

An intangible sword with no sword blade.

That was—

With his disposal completed, Leonard and Boris left composedly.

On their backs was the school building surrounded by a blazing large fire which then collapsed, crumbling together with a roaring sound.

The abandoned closed school that was deep in the mountains was now completely buried without leaving any shape this time.

Was it accomplishing its duty as a beacon tower in its last moment by making the black smoke reach the heavens?

This was the trigger.

The sign that their King finally returned and that the Six Wings would start moving for real.

Just like the light that was so strong it created a strong shadow.

At the same time, the union of □Order□ caused the demon lurking in the bottom of the earth to be revived....

Credits

Translation Group : Taekan translation

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